

Hafey

THE
M E M O I R S
O F
NINON DE L'ENCLOS:

With her LETTERS to
MONS^R. DE ST. EVREMOND,
AND TO THE
Marquis de Sevigné.

Collected and Translated from the FRENCH,
BY A L A D Y.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Donec erunt ignes, arcusque cupidinis arma,
Discentur numeri, culte Tibulle, tui.

Op. de Art. Am. Lib. I.

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MEMOIRS

OF

WILLIAM PETER

OF ST. EVREMOY

THE



MANUSCRIPTS

BY A. D. Y.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

OF THE

PRINTED FOR J. DODD, IN FLEET STREET, LONDON.

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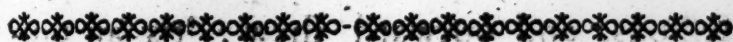


T H E
L E T T E R S
O F

Mademoiselle Ninon de l'Enclos

T O

The Marquis de Sevigné.



L E T T E R XXI.

YOU would use integrity in love, Marquis! You are far gone truly. I shall not shew your letter. You would be made a jest of. You cannot, you say, employ the artifice I advised you to. Your

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candor and refined sentiments might have raised your character in ancient days. Love was then considered as an affair of honour and punctilio. But at present, since the corruption of times has quite changed our notions, it is treated merely as a sport of vanity or caprice. Your inexperience has left a stiffness in your moral that will certainly demolish you, if your good sense does not supple you to the manners of the age.

One must not, now-a-days, keep a window in our breasts. All is grimace: we must take up with complaisance, professions, and outward shew: 'tis an universal comedy, and the world are much in the right to perform it. Society would soon be at an end, were we mutually to declare our true sentiments of each other, the bad along with the good. The necessary intercourse of mankind obliged them to lay aside this uncouth sincerity, and

and to assume a certain polished phrase, and flattering address in the place of it.

This habit, by degrees, is obtained in galantry; and notwithstanding your nice scruples, you must agree that when the manners of politeness are not employed to ridicule or deceive, they are to be reckoned among the social virtues—and the commerce in which it is most necessary to disguise our sentiments, is galantry. Upon many occasions, a lover gains as much by concealing the greatness of his passion, as he does upon others by feigning it.

I know the Countess, her character.—She has more address than you. I dare say, that she dissembles her affections for you, with as much pains as you take to multiply the proofs of yours. I must repeat it again—Be less assiduous, and you will be better received. Make her jealous in her turn. Give her fears of losing

A 3

you.

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you. I'll warrant then you'll soon find her more complying. 'Tis at least the surest way of knowing the rank you hold in her Affections.

Adieu.

L E T T E R XXII.

ATEN days silence, Marquis! I really began to be uneasy. The application of my advice, then, has been successful. I wish you joy of it. But I am angry with you for being chagrined because she would not make you a confession in form. The *I love you*, it seems, is a precious expression with you. During this fortnight you have been endeavouring to penetrate the sentiments of the Countess, and have at length attained them. You have discovered her regards for you. What should you desire more? Would a simple confession give you a further power over her heart? There is something

thing impolitic in this conduct : for do you know that nothing is more apt to disgust a woman of any nicety, than the insisting upon that very expression, she has refused you ? You are much mistaken. — To a lover of true delicacy, this refusal would be infinitely preferable to an explicit declaration.

Would you understand your true interest ? Instead of pressing your mistress upon this point, you should endeavour rather, as I told you before, to hide from herself the progress of her attachment toward you. Contrive to win her affections, before she perceives your design ; and conceal it as much as possible, even from her own observation.

Can one imagine a situation more charming, than to perceive a heart interested on ones behalf, without the least consciousness in itself ; growing warm by degrees, and

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melting away to the most perfect tenderness? What transport, to rejoice in secret over all its emotions, to guide, to augment, to precipitate them, and to congratulate one's self on the victory, before the yielding fair has surmised even a suspicion of the siege! These are what I stile pleasures indeed!

Attend to me, Marquis; behave yourself toward the Countess, as if the confession had already escaped her. Perhaps you may never be able to prevail on her to pronounce the words, *I love you*; but 'tis because she really loves you, that she will not say so; while at the same time she is doing every thing necessary to convince you of it. Women labour under great difficulties: they are at least as willing as you, to acknowledge the passion you have inspired them with. But what would you have them do, Marquis? Men, most ingenious to forge shackles for themselves,
have

have affixed a certain shame to the confession of our passion ; and whatever notions ye may have framed of our manners of thinking, believe me that this same declaration is always a mortifying circumstance to us. Those who have the least knowledge of the world, must be very sensible of the consequences. The *I love you*, in itself, is certainly a very innocent expression ; but the effects attending it, must necessarily alarm us. It rests upon you then, to conceal them from us, and to shut our eyes upon the precipices you are leading us toward.

Besides, Marquis, attend to this nice point. Your obstinacy in persisting in this confession, is less the effect of love, than vanity ; and you will find it a difficult matter to deceive us about the real motives of your instances. Nature has endowed us with an admirable instinct ; and has taught us to distinguish with great

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precision, between what arises from the passion itself, and what is heterogeneous from it.

Ever indulgent to the effects produced by the love we have ourselves inspired, we freely pardon ye the indiscretions, the extravagancies—the whole catalogue of follies you lovers are liable to. But, you will always find us intractable, whenever your pride attempts to combat ours. It is hardly to be credited, but you often disgust us by things which are by no means necessary to your own happiness. Your vanity grasps at *shadows*, while *substances* escape you.

If you would govern yourself by my judgment, turn aside from this vain pursuit, begin to enjoy a surer earnest of your triumph, taste the dear pleasure of hiding this secret from her own heart, and suffer her for a while, to rejoice in her *insolvent* security.

security. Suppose that your importunities should at length wrest this so envied phrase from her lips; what more certain advantage would you gain by it? Your doubts, would they then cease? Could you rest satisfied whether you owed this expression to complaisance, or to love?

I know women perfectly well. They may deceive by premeditated action, or deliberate speech; but the involuntary tokens of a passion, they are striving to conceal, bear sure and certain testimony. In fine, the confessions truly flattering, are never those we make, but those that escape us.

LETTER XXIII.

WILL you pardon me, Marquis? I laugh at your afflictions! You take things extremely to the heart! Some indiscretions of yours have raised the re-

sentment of the Countess, and your inquietude is inexpressible. You kissed her hand with an emphasis that was taken notice of by the company; she shewed public marks of her displeasure; and the constant preferences you observe toward her, ever mortifying to other women, have exposed you to the piqued railleries of the Marchioness, her sister-in-law.

These are, in sad truth, most unfortunate events! But are you really so simple as to betake yourself to despair, upon the outward appearance of such a quarrel, without conceiving the least hope of an inward forgiveness? 'Tis left for me, then, to re-assure your courage; and, in order to this, I shall be forced to reveal some more of our female mysteries to you. I cannot, upon every occasion, make apologies for our sex.—I owe you frankness. I have promised it—and I acquit myself.

Women

Women are generally actuated by two incompatible passions—the desire of pleasing, and the fear of infamy. Judge you of our embarrassment! On one hand, we are ardent to have witnesses of the effects of our charms.—For ever occupied toward the making ourselves taken notice of, and transported with every opportunity of humbling other women, we would render them spectators of every homage paid us, and of all the preferences we obtain. Would you know wherein the pleasure lies here? In mortifying the pride of our rivals meerly.—Those indiscretions which betray the sentiments we have inspired, delight us in proportion to their despair.—In fine, such imprudences convince us better of your passion, than the timidity and caution which are incapable of celebrating our charms.

But, on the other hand, what bitterness allays our sweetest pleasures! Blended with

with these advantages are the malice of our rivals, and perhaps the contempt of our lovers. Besides, another hard case is, that the world knows no difference between those who receive your addresses, and those who reward them. Alone, or in sober thought, every rational woman would prefer the character of chastity, to the fame of beauty. But, place the best of us in competition with a rival, capable of disputing with her the prize—were she to risk that reputation she was the moment before so jealous of—was the lover to endanger it to the last degree—no consideration is of equal weight with the triumphant pleasure of seeing herself preferred.

You will receive your preferences in turn; she will imagine at first, that she pays them to gratitude alone; but you will find them earnest of her affection.—Avoiding to appear ungrateful, we exceed

to fondness.^a Your indiscretions then, never offend us. When we seem to resent, 'tis because we should save appearances, and that you would be yourselves the first to censure a too remiss indulgence.

But, take care how you mistake this point.—Not to trespass, upon such occasions, would be a certain way to offend us. We recommend prudence and discretion to ye. Is not this the part given us to play? Is it necessary that we should teach you yours? Oft' have I heard it said, that to take the *Letter*, was to mistake the *Spirit* of a law. You will answer our intentions, when you know how to construe them.

^a There is the same sentiment in the Orphan.

“Great spirits bear misfortunes hardly;

“Good offices claim gratitude: and pride,

“Where power is wanting, will usurp a little,

“And make us, rather than be thought behind-hand,

“Pay over price.” — —

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

THE Countess, it seems, is at present on the defensive. You think she has now no other design but to prove your attachments. Whatever preferences you mark towards her, however indiscreetly you testify your passion, she receives them all without resentment:—the least apology silences her reproofs, and her piques have something so engaging in them, that you even lay traps to provoke them.

I rejoice heartily with you in the pleasure that such a success must afford you.—But, however these proceedings may flatter you, if you have any esteem for her, you should endeavour to put an end to them. Women, who have any sense, or the least attention to their reputations, but little understand their true interests, in multiplying thus, by an affected incredulity,

lity, the occasions of censure. Must they not know it is not their most frail moments that most affect their characters? The doubts they pretend about the passion they have inspired, do them often more injury, even than their defeat itself.

While they remain incredulous, a thousand imprudences expose them. They break bulk, and vend their reputations by retail. While a lover finds them still dubious of his attachments, he throws aside all reserve, whenever he meets with any opportunity of shewing the sincerity of his professions. The most indiscreet earnestness, the most distinguished preferences, and the most unguarded solicitude, appear to him the surest method of conviction. And can he make ostentation of all these cares and assiduities, without having them taken notice of by the world—without piquing the pride of other women—

men—without provoking their most censorious reflections?

As soon as preliminaries are settled, that is, as soon as we begin to believe ourselves really beloved, nothing appears outwardly, nothing transpires.—And, if our engagements happen to be suspected, if our disguise is discovered, it must be from the recollection of what had passed before our affections were determined. I wish then, for the sake of both parties, that whenever a woman perceives herself indifferent to a lover, instead of suffering him to be amused by vain hopes, she would immediately give him his *audience of leave*. But at the same time, I would advise, that the moment she is persuaded she is truly beloved by a man she likes, she will acknowledge this conviction.—*Saving and reserving to herself*, however, the *dear right* of obliging him to hope, fear, pray, and beseech, as long as she thinks fit, before she confesses

esses her reciprocal affection. For one cannot seem to doubt, without laying the lover under a necessity of proving his sincerity ; and he cannot demonstrate it with success, without making the public his confidants, by the too great earnestness of his devoirs.

This advice would have been by no means necessary in former times, when the want of address in men suffered women to remain intractable. But now-a-days, that the resolution of the assailants leave us so little power of defence—at present, when it is affirmed, that since the invention of powder, no citadel is impregnable—why should we expose ourselves to the tediousness of a siege in form, when it is certain, that after a great deal of loss and trouble, we must capitulate at last ?

Then teach your charming Countess this prudent lesson.—Shew her the inconveniences

ces of any further diffidence; you will convince her of your passion. — You will force her to believe you, by the management she should have of her reputation, which will supply her with one reason more, for according you a credit, which she has perhaps, been for some time in pain to refuse you.

Farewel.

L E T T E R XXV.

MY last letter, then, has provoked you, Marquis, and you insist upon it, that 'tis not impossible to meet with virtuous women, even in these our Days. And well! did I ever deny it? In comparing women to places besieged, did I say that there were no towns which had never been taken? Nay, how could I say so, when there are many that were never invested? You see, then, how perfectly I agree with you. But to prevent
any

any farther mistakes between us, on this point, let me explain myself a little.—Here follows my system of faith, upon this article.

I stedfastly believe in women of virtue, who have never been assaulted, or where the siege has been ill carried on. I believe also, in women of virtue, tho' assaulted and well invested—when they happen to have neither a turn for galantry, nor strong passions, nor opportunity, nor a disagreeable husband.

I have a mind to repeat to you, on this occasion, a sensible conversation I had once, upon this subject, when I was very young, with a certain prude, whom an unlucky adventure happened to betray to public censure. I had but little experience at that time, and judged always of others with that severity one is apt to preserve, 'till our own personal weaknesses have inspired us with somewhat more of indul-

indulgence toward the failings of our neighbours. I had made very free with this lady's character, and she had heard it. I met her accidentally one day, at the house of a friend. She took me aside, and held the following discourse with me, which made such an impression on my memory; that the very words have not been yet effaced.

“ It is not with design to reproach you,
 “ said she, with the liberty of speech you
 “ have taken, relative to my misfortune,
 “ that I have sought this opportunity of
 “ entertaining you alone. It is to inform
 “ you of some sentiments upon this topic;
 “ which, if you do not die very young,
 “ you may, perhaps, one day experience
 “ the full force of.

“ You have censured my conduct freely,
 “ and seem to regard me with that disdain,
 “ which argues how much you are elated,
 “ on account of your having never yet
 “ given

"given the world any manner of ad-
 "vantage against you. You imagine that
 "you have virtue, and presume this prin-
 "ciple will ever abide with you. These
 "are, my dear child, but the illusions of
 "your self-sufficiency. I am called up-
 "on to instruct your inexperience, and
 "to make you suspect, that so far from
 "being able to depend upon this same
 "virtue, which renders you so inexo-
 "rable to others, you cannot be cer-
 "tain even whether you have any of it
 "at all. This assertion may, perhaps,
 "surprize you; but lend me your whole
 "attention, and you may probably be
 "soon convinced of the truth of my
 "affirmation.

"Men have not yet paid their ad-
 "dresses to you: your mirror, alone,
 "has given you an idea of your charms.
 "Your heart—I judge from the care-
 "lessness of your whole deportment—
 has

“ has not yet entered you into its fe-
 “ cret councils. The impulses of na-
 “ ture have not hitherto—*Here she was*
 “ *mistaken*—explained themselves to you.
 “ While you remain in such an indo-
 “ lent situation, or while your guar-
 “ dians *keep you in view*, if I may so
 “ express myself, I will myself be respon-
 “ sible for you.

“ But — after your heart has discour-
 “ sed you a little—when those eyes, that
 “ wound already, shall have received
 “ the addition of sentimental life and
 “ expression — when those *windows to*
 “ *the breast* shall have betrayed love by
 “ intuition — when interior movements
 “ shall have roused you from supine-
 “ ness——in fine, when inclinations, al-
 “ most smothered by the scruples of
 “ strict education, may have occasioned
 “ you to blush sometimes in secret—
 “ then, my dear prude, your own sen-
 “ sibility, and the struggles you will
 exert

" exert to overcome it, may by degrees,
 " diminish your severity toward others,
 " and suffer their failings to plead some
 " defence before your too rigid tribunal.
 " — The judge will mitigate the verdict.
 " — The experience of your own weak-
 " nefs will caution you from deeming
 " your virtue infallible. Nay, your sur-
 " prize may be still carried farther, and
 " the little aid you may be able to deduce
 " from thence, will naturally raise some
 " suspicion, that in reality, you never
 " were possessed of such a principle at
 " all.

" Can one be assured that a man is
 " brave, who has never been essayed?
 " Women are in the same predicament.
 " Experience alone, equally approves
 " chastity, and ascertains valour. 'Till
 " we have tried an enemy, we are ig-
 " norant how far he is redoubtable, and
 " what degree of prowess it may be re-
 " VOL. II. B " quisite

"quisite to oppose to him." In like man-
 "ner, before a woman has the right to
 "compliment herself on account of virtue
 "or chastity, as essentially within her own
 "powers, she should be certain that no
 "danger, however great, no motive
 "though ever so pressing, nor any pre-
 "tence, how plausible soever, can have
 "force enough to overcome her reso-
 "lution. It is requisite that the most fa-
 "vourable opportunity, the fondest pas-
 "sion, the surest reliance on secrecy,
 "the most perfect esteem and confidence
 "in the lover; in a word, that all these
 "allurements, combined together, shall
 "not be sufficient to warp her integrity.

"In reality, to be assured that her
 "virtues is to be accepted, in the proper

^b Fighting is bravery, but declining it is pru-
 dence: and there is this happy difference between
 the sexes, with regard to this point, that men may
 sometimes injure their character, but women uni-
 versally insure theirs, by avoiding the conflict.
The Parthian exercise is our best discipline.

signifi-

“signification of the expression, she must
 “be one who has vindicated her chastity
 “from all these united dangers: for it
 “would be but a slight merit to have
 “resisted love, without constitution—op-
 “portunity, without passion—or desires,
 “without occasion. Her chastity must
 “still remain problematical, before she
 “has been encountered by all the forces that
 “are capable of being brought down a-
 “gainst her. For it may well be ur-
 “ged, that with a different kind of com-
 “plexion, she might not have resisted
 “love: or, that an unlucky occasion
 “might have given advantage against
 “her.”

“At this rate then, I replied, there
 “may not be such a person in the world,
 “as a virtuous woman: for, ’tis very pro-
 “bable that we may not be able to pro-
 “duce a single instance, where such a
 “train of artillery has been played off
 B 2 “against

“against any one fortress.” “’Tis more
 “than probable, says she; but would
 “you know the reason? Because such a
 “combined force is rarely requisite to
 “conquer our resistance. Sometimes,
 “one of these enemies alone, may be
 “sufficient to do our business.”

I still debated—“You seem to think
 “then, said I, that our virtue is by no
 “means in our own power, since you
 “make it to depend upon so many
 “circumstances, foreign to our own
 “election.”

“Certainly—prithee answer me—Is it
 “within the power of your own election
 “to give yourself a warm or a cold com-
 “plexion? Can you assume resolution
 “sufficient to combat the impetuosity of
 “passion? Can you arrange all the circum-
 “stances of your life so happily, as never
 “to find yourself alone, with a lover
 “you

“ you approve, who knows his advantages, and how to profit of them? In short, is it in your power to prevent his addressees, though innocent at first, from marking on your affections, those impressions, which it is natural for them to strike? Those things are certainly, neither within our option, or our power—And to affirm the contrary, would be as unphilosophic, as to say that steel may resist the loadstone.

“ And, yet you pretend that your virtue is within your own province! How vain to attribute to ones self a principle to-day, which we may be in danger of forfeiting to-morrow! The chastity of women, like every other advantage, boasted or possessed by mortals, is a peculiar grace from heaven. —It is a *boon*, and therefore may be refused us.

" Consider then how partially you
 " vaunt yourself, from the meer presump-
 " tions of your self-sufficiency; and ac-
 " knowledge your injustice, in so un-
 " charitably censuring those, who may
 " have received from nature an irresist-
 " ble proneness to love, whom a violent
 " passion might have overpowered, or
 " who may have been surprized at some
 " of those unlucky moments, in which,
 " perhaps, you might not have extri-
 " cated yourself, with better success.

" If you'll attend, I shall supply you
 " with a farther proof of the justness of
 " my reasoning. Are you not secretly
 " of opinion, that every woman who
 " would preserve her integrity, should
 " assiduously parry every kind of advan-
 " tage that may possibly be taken a-
 " gainst her? That she ought to pay
 " attention even to trifles, the most minute
 " in themselves, because they may lead
 " per-

“ perchance, to things of more importance?
 “ ’Tis much a safer refuge, to discourage
 “ the pursuit by a proper reserve, than to
 “ depend upon our defence, upon the at-
 “ tack.

“ May not the proof of my proposition
 “ be evinced from this one argument also,
 “ that the experience of mothers induces
 “ them to lay every kind of restraint upon
 “ their daughters, that prudence can de-
 “ vise? They proceed further.—A cau-
 “ tious matron depends neither upon the
 “ principles of her ward, nor on the fear
 “ of infamy, nor upon the unfavourable
 “ opinions she has instilled with regard to
 “ the morals of men: she keeps her con-
 “ stantly *in view*; she opposes every diffi-
 “ culty she can contrive, in the road of
 “ temptation.

“ What is the reason of all these pre-
 “ cautions? Is it not that these guardians

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“ tremble for our safety, should they suffer us
“ to be exposed for one moment to danger?
“ And yet, notwithstanding all this *clois-*
“ *ter* discipline, how frequently does it
“ happen, that love has the power of tri-
“ umphing over every bulwark!

“ A young woman, well educated, or
“ to express myself, juster, well attended
“ to, conceives a certain pride in her vir-
“ tue, because she is apt to impute it to
“ her peculiar merit: but in truth, it is
“ only a slave, which tho' closely chained,
“ would challenge praise for not running
“ away.

“ Prithee, look round, and observe a-
“ mong what classes of life, you generally
“ find the *forlorn hope*. Is it not in those,
“ where they are neither rich or happy e-
“ nough to be constantly surrounded with
“ all those *outworks* which may have pro-
“ bably guarded yourself? In those, where
“ men

“ men have attacked them with more as-
 “ surance, more easily, more frequently,
 “ and consequently, with all manner of ad-
 “ vantages? In those, where the impres-
 “ sions of education, example, pride, or
 “ the prospect of some happy establish-
 “ ment, have not defended them? A rank
 “ or two lower, you might yourself have
 “ been born that very woman whom you
 “ now disdain; and notwithstanding those
 “ adventitious succours, which have sup-
 “ ported the virtue you are now so vain of,
 “ it is possible that in a few days, you may
 “ become more despicable than her, be-
 “ cause you have had some advantages a-
 “ bove her.

“ I do not, however, take away from
 “ the merit of your virtue, in order to
 “ lessen your attachment to it: but, by
 “ giving you some idea of your own weak-
 “ ness, I mean only to draw from you a
 “ little indulgence toward those unhappy

“ones, whom too impetuous a passion,
 “or the fortuitousness of other circum-
 “stances, may have precipitated into a
 “situation, so truly mortifying to their
 “own reflections. My sole intent is, to
 “convince you, that you should not exult
 “so much upon an advantage, which you
 “are not indebted to yourself for, and
 “which the accidents of to-morrow may,
 “perhaps, deprive you of.”

She would have proceeded, but was interrupted by persons who joined us. It was not long before my own experience convinced me, that I ought not to have conceived so high an opinion of many virtues, which had been imposed upon me for such before—beginning with my own.

LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

I Perfectly agree with you, Marquis—
 Though the sentiments I communicated to you in my last letter, may appear true in speculation, it may however be dangerous that all women should be too much convinced of them. It is not through an opinion of our frailty, that we are likely to remain chaste; but from an happy persuasion that we are free agents, and at perfect liberty to resist or yield. Is it by telling a foldier he shall be overcome, that you inspirit his courage to the combat? But you might easily have perceived that the person who harangued in my letter, had a personal interest in establishing her philosophy.

It is true, that to look narrowly into the general frailty of human nature, her arguments will appear specious, at least ;—but

it may be justly apprehended, that by allowing us to reason thus, upon the nature of virtue, we admit those rules to be doubtful, which we should implicitly accept; and practise as ordinances, the very examining into which is to be deemed a crime.

Besides, to persuade women that their virtue is not specifical, would probably destroy their strongest motive for preserving it. Namely, the fond opinion, that it is their own province they are defending. Discouragement would be the natural consequence of such an argument: so that it could possibly serve no other purpose, than to lessen the silent upbraidings of a frail woman, under the guilt of a vicious conduct. But, let us proceed to matters which are of consequence to yourself alone.

In fine, after a world of doubts, fears, and revolutions in your amour, you are at length

length convinced of your happiness. You have wrought up the Countess to one of those tender moments, when she could no longer retain her secret; and she has at length pronounced, without reserve, that charming word, you have so long and passionately wished to hear the sound of. She has been carried farther.—Some involuntary testimonies have escaped her, which more sufficiently ascertain her affection toward you. These, instead of weakening your passion, have added new fuel to the flame. You are, in a word, the happiest mortal alive. If you knew the thorough satisfaction I receive from your present situation, it would probably give some little increase to it.

The first sacrifice she offered you, was to banish the Chevalier. But you declined it, and you judged right. This would have been to have exposed the Countess, without gaining any thing, on your own part.

part. And indeed, I have generally observed, that women oftener lose themselves by imprudencies, than by real faults. The confidence you have reposed in her, by so generous a proceeding, must have a delicate effect upon her sentiment.

Every thing, thus far, is as well as one could reasonably hope for. But to speak freely, the turn this adventure seems to take, begins to alarm me. We sat out, if you remember, upon a maxim, that love was to be treated rather *cavalierly*: you were not to suffer that affection to obtain more than a slight and temporary sway over your heart, and not a formal and permanent empire. But I begin to observe, that matters, by degrees, assume a serious face, and you actually seem of late to consider this passion with a certain air of dignity, that renders me uneasy. The acknowledgment of true merit, real qualities, and an amiable character, seem to

to enter into the motives of your attachment; which joined to her more obvious beauties, have rendered you a *forlorn hope*, in turn. Esteem is a dangerous ingredient, mixed up with galantry. It does not leave one sufficiently at liberty; and reduces love to an *occupation*, rather than an *amusement*. In fine, I become apprehensive, that your adventure may soon take a turn, perhaps rather grave, than gay.

But possibly, the spirit of the Countess may raise up fresh commotions; and new difficulties may re-animate your attachment.—Too profound a peace suffers it to relax. Security weakens love. When formal systems once take possession of the heart, passion subsides, indolence takes place, weariness succeeds, and disgust finally closes the scene.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

MAdame de Sevigné does not agree in my opinion, you say, with regard to the true causes of love. She pretends that there are many women who know nothing but the fair side of this passion, and that the senses come not in for the least share in their attachment. She adds, that tho' what she is pleased to stile my *system*, were true, it would be a very improper piece of philosophy for a woman to utter, and might have a bad effect upon morals.

These are serious rebukes indeed; but what foundation have they? None—that I can see. I am sorry to find that Madame de Sevigné has not read my letters in the *spirit* they were written. *Systems*! she does me too much honour truly. I never had studious application enough for *systems*.
Besides

Besides, I have always looked upon them as philosophic dreams; and does she receive all I have said as the sport of fancy only? We seem to be very far from a reckoning. I *imagine* nothing. I paint *real* objects. I would establish a certain truth—in order to which, I would not surprize the wit, but challenge the understanding. She might perhaps, be struck with some of my propositions, though they appeared to me so very self-evident, that I did not stay to prove them. Nor indeed, is it worth while to borrow geometrical scales, for weighing a maxim in galantry.

Besides, I am so much averse to the pedantry of argument, that I would sooner give up a point, than contend it. Madame de Sevigné, you say, is acquainted with a great many female *Platonists*. Agreed.—Let her take her *exceptions*, and leave me the *rule*. I will grant too, if she pleases,

ses, that there are certain *privileged* souls in this wicked world—for I never denied the *virtues—of constitution*. These women I make her a present of also. I make no critic upon them. Their characters are irreproachable. They must not, however, expect encomiums from me. I wish them joy—if possible—and that's enough.

In the mean time, examine them philosophically, and you will perceive the truth of my original maxim. *The heart must be occupied*. If nature prompts not, or inclines them not more particularly to galantry, you'll find that some other object has laid hold of their affections, in its stead. Some become quite insensible to love, because they have expended all the sentiment they were capable of, upon some other passion. The Count de Lude, I am told, has not been always regarded with indifference, by Madame de Sevigné

Seigné—But a most parental fondness for Madame de Grignan swallows up the *whole woman* in her soul, at present.

She says farther, that I am extremely blameable toward my own sex: if I had the least charity, I should have concealed the faults or imperfections I have been so quick-sighted as to discover in them—or, to express it more justly—that my sex has made me discover in myself.

But really Marquis, do you imagine that if all I have said should be printed, women would be angry with me? You do not know them. On the contrary, they would find their account in it greatly,—for in effect, to say that they are led toward galantry, by a mechanical impulse, is in a great measure to set them at their ease. Has it not the appearance of restoring the credit of their *fatality*—their
stroke

stroke of sympathy,^c which they are so ready to offer as excuses for their weakness; and in which, by the bye, I have so little faith. In considering love as the result of reason, you are not aware of the blow you give their pride, by rendering them thus responsible for their choice, good or bad.

In short, Marquis, women of every character would have reason to be satisfied with my letters. The metaphysicians, those whom their kind stars have peculiarly organized, might there observe with triumph, their superiority over others: they would congratulate themselves upon such advantage, and impute the merit solely to their particular virtue. While women of a less seraphic mold, ought to be much obliged to me for revealing a secret that lies heavy at their hearts. It has been made their duty to discernable their senti-

^c See the first paragraph of Letter VI.

ments, and they would maintain this decency, at as little expence of pleasure as possible. They would be pleased then, to have the truth discovered, without their betraying it themselves. Whoever therefore, shall anatomize their hearts, will do them a most grateful piece of service. Thus should I recommend myself to our sex, by a double address, respectively agreeable; in adopting maxims that favour their inclinations, and by affording to some, occasions of displaying their extraordinary delicacy.

Indeed, Marquis, you discover a perfect ignorance of women, to imagine they would be offended at my philosophy upon this subject. 'Tis a certain truth that they would rather be even spoken ill of, than not to be spoken of at all. So that had I written these essays with that very uncharitable design now charged upon me, you

you see I have a tolerable chance of escaping, at least, all *private* resentment.

But, Madame de Sevigné is also uneasy about the consequences of my *system*: which apprehension, from the high opinion I have of her understanding, I am surprized at. By disarming Cupid of his arrows, by considering love as an effect of constitution, vanity or caprice, by distinguishing the humble passion itself, from the metaphysical dignity of it, have I not rendered it infinitely less dangerous to mankind, than it would be, if according to her *system*, we should *constellate* it among the virtues? In fine, you may compare me, if you please, to one of the antient legislators, who is reported to have lessened the power of women over his citizens, by shewing them naked.

But I shall make a further effort in your favour; and since I am taken for a *systematical* reasoner, I shall not seem altogether unworthy

unworthy of so flourishing a title. Let us for a while, then, discuss the point of gallantry, with that method and philosophy, which might become the most serious topic.

Is not love a passion? Do not your severe moralists affirm, that passions and vices are synonymous? Is vice ever more seducing, than when it assumes the character of virtue? It ought never, therefore, to be suffered to appear, but under such disadvantages, as might alarm the chaste mind. This, however, was not the design of the *Platonists*, when they so prophanely deified it. And in all ages, have they not endeavoured to authorize the passions, by involving them among the pagan hierarchy? Behold! I step forth a reformer—I decry the popular superstition—I break the vain idol—but confess my rashness at the same time, and must expect a female persecution for attacking thus their favourite worship.

I own

I own I am much concerned upon this account myself. They were rare times truly, when women might acknowledge their fond impressions, without a blush—nay, even boast their passion, and shield their *weakness* under the *strength* of the deity. But, why must poor humanity be superseded? Why disclaim its power, and search in heaven for the causes of our foibles? Let us abide on earth, and imagine for them here—We shall find their dominion intirely below.^d

In
^d The ingenious author of the Dialogues of the Gods, in his preface, speaking of the refinements of love, says, “ I am not certain that morals have
 “ gained much by the change.—They have rendered
 “ this passion more alluring by taking away every
 “ appearance of vice from it. As it is disguised at
 “ present, we deliver ourselves up to the impression,
 “ without a blush, and who dares reproach us with a
 “ vice that has so much the appearance of a virtue?
 “ Romances are full of admirable sentiments.—All
 “ manner

In reality, I have not in any of my letters, expressly declaimed against love, nor have I advised you to leave it out of your scheme of life. I know too well, the usefulness of such counsels. But I have let you into the true secret of the matter; by which I have lessened the illusion it might otherwise have led you into.—I have at least, diminished its influence over you, and every day's experience will support my doctrines.

I know that they act very differently in the education of women: but what is the consequence? they begin by deceiving them—possess them with as great a fear of love, as old nurses do of sprites. Men are represented to them as monsters of perfidy

“manner of virtues are there displayed.—The grossness of love is subtilized into delicacy, and the heroes and heroines are certain pure intelligences, whose bodies are but merely *accidents*, which are by no means instrumental to their pleasures.”

and infidelity. A handsome young fellow presents himself: his sentiments delicate; behaviour modest and respectful. The fair one, who has been educated in the manner above mentioned, will immediately conclude she has been imposed upon. She will find the sentiments that this same *monster* has excited in her breast, to be of a very different kind from those of horror; and as soon as she detects any exaggeration, her instructors will begin to forfeit all further credit with her.

They mislead them also another way, and how can it well be avoided? They take infinite care not to let them know, or even suffer them to imagine, that they shall be attacked by the senses; and that these are the most dangerous enemies they will have to encounter. In short, they speak to them as if they were perfect angels. The consequence of which is, that not having been properly warned of the
nature

nature of the attack, they may not be sufficiently armed to sustain it. How could they ever take it into their heads, of themselves, that their most redoubted adversary, should be one that they had never once been cautioned against? And what sort of *extempore* defence can they make upon the occasion?

It is not then, the lover they should have been forewarned of—it is themselves. —For what avails the lover's *wishing*, without the fair one's *willing*? So that, Marquis, when I acquaint my sex, that their weakness lies in nature, I do not mean to encourage them to follow their inclinations; but on the contrary, to caution them against their greatest danger. 'Tis like informing the governor of a citadel, that he was defending himself in the wrong place, being in more hazard of being betrayed within, than conquered from without.

In fine, by rating at their just value those sentiments to which women have annexed such sublime ideas, and by making known the true intention, of even the most refined lovers, you may perceive, that I pique their vanity to be less ambitious of being beloved, and their hearts to receive less self-approbation, in loving. And be assured, that whenever we can oppose pride to pleasure, some advantage will generally be gained, on the part of virtue.

I have had lovers myself; but they never could impose on me. I well knew the whole scope of their addresses.—I was certain, that if my sense or character had any share in the motives which determined them to throw themselves at my feet, it was merely because those merits flattered their vanity. They loved me because I was handsome, and they had desires. For which reason they never obtained more than

than the second place in my esteem—the first being always occupied by my friends. For friendship, I have ever preserved that deference, that constancy and respect, which so noble a sentiment deserves—one so worthy of possessing the generous mind.—In a word, I have always conceived a diffidence of those hearts, where love appeared to be the principal guest. This weakness degraded them in my eyes; and I regarded those persons as incapable of exalting their souls to sentiments of true esteem, toward a woman whom they had principally wished to enjoy.

You see then, Marquis, that the consequences to be drawn from my premises, are by no means dangerous. All that can be said to me by persons of any sense, is, that I have taken a great deal of idle pains to prove to you a proposition, that was obvious enough before. But your inexperience and curiosity must be my

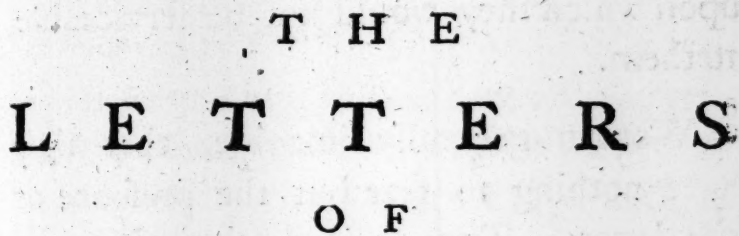
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apology, for what I have written, or may hereafter say to you, upon this subject.

Farewel.

THE END *of the* FIRST PART.

THE



T O

PART II.

YOU are certainly right, Marquis.—The taste and talent that the Countess has for music, will bring a great addition both to your love and happiness. I have frequently told women, the infinite

advan.

advantages they might reap, from the due improvement and exercise of their accomplishments. There are very few occasions, upon which they would not be serviceable to them.

Women generally imagine, that they have nothing to fear but the presence of the lover. True indeed, that they may have then, two enemies to contend with at a time; their passion, and the party. But when the lover has retired, the love still remains; and the progress it makes in solitude, though less perceivable, is not the less dangerous. At such intervals as these, the playing on a harpsichord, painting a flower, or reading some work of genius, may turn aside the thoughts from ideas too alluring, and fix the attention upon safer objects. All these occupations then, which employ the mind, are so many *countermines* to temptation.*

A lover

* Shakespear has a fine poetical moral, upon this subject, in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

“ yet

A lover has an opportunity of entertaining his mistress apart: she has beauty and good-humour only: what can he do with her? how amuse himself, without sense or vanity? Love is active; 'tis a voracious flame, and still demands fresh fuel. If it has nothing but objects of sense, to exercise itself upon, it must lay hold on those, and make the best of them. In short, if the *mind* be not employed, the *senses* will. He is reduced to the necessity of *dumb-show*, and of explaining his passion in the least equivocal manner, to a person who is not capable of understanding a more delicate language.

It is not merely by resistless attempts, or resenting freedoms, that women can expect to preserve their virtue. When they

" Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell.—

" It was upon a little western flower,

" Before milk-white--now purple wth love's wound;

" And maidens call it *Love in idleness*.

C 5

suffer

suffer themselves to be attacked, after such a manner, their very defence alarms the senses; the emotions of resistance hazard their defeat; and they are yielding, even in the conflict. But 'tis by presenting other and various objects, to the lovers attention, that they may best evade such enterprizes; the mortification and danger of which, I am sorry to say, they have themselves mostly to charge with: for 'tis almost certain, that men rarely make attempts, except where indiscretions have given the encouragement.

There is no man of any education, or knowledge of the world, but can easily judge to what degree of freedom he may venture to extend his behaviour. For which reason, I have never attended to women, who have complained to me of a lover's rudeness. Upon examination, I have generally found that some imprudent or inconsiderate conduct of theirs, first gave

occasion to it. Women have no other way left, of *begging the question*.

But indeed our want of sense or education may, as I hinted before, subject us, equally with our indiscretions, to the same misfortune. For, with a woman who has neither wit or accomplishment, what can a man do, but *enterprize*? He has no other way to rid his time of her, but to romp or teaze. He cannot pretend to introduce any other topic of conversation, except her beauty, with the deep impression it has made upon his senses; and one must use the language of the senses, to express their effect. Nay, how can she seem convinced of your passion, declare her sympathy, or return your flame, but by the senses alone? by shewing her emotions equal to your own? or at best, her expiring chastity has nothing left to oppose, but peevishness only—the last resource of a silly woman: and a wretched one it is!

What advantage, on the contrary, has a woman of address and spirit? A lively repartée, a disconcerting raillery, a quick resentment, an apt quotation, or an applicable story, are not these so many *diversions* in her favour, and so much good time gained on the side of virtue?

Women's chief misfortune is certainly this; their not having been rendered capable of occupying their minds with objects worthy their attention; which renders love a more violent passion in their breasts, than it usually is among men. But they possess at the same time a lucky sentiment, which under proper direction, is of admirable service to them. Their vanity is at least equal to their sensibility. Oppose one to the other. While a woman is taken up with the ambition of pleasing, otherwise than by her person, she for the time, attends not to the very sentiment that has excited her desire to charm.—In reality,
this

this same sentiment will nevertheless, continue to be the *determining motive*, if I may use a term of science, but it will cease to be the present and immediate object of her passion; which let me assure you, is a great point gained. Intirely occupied in acquiring that kind of eminence she has set her heart upon, this very aim, though guided by love itself, will turn against it, by dividing the attention of the mind, and the affections of the heart.—This is perplexing the enemy, by presenting two objects of operation, at once.

You will tell me perhaps, that according to this reasoning, women of wit and talents should be looked upon as impregnable; and that men naturally hating trouble, should avoid such pursuit. And yet, you'll add, that the stupid, as well as the sensible, equally address such women.—'Tis very true.—But the true reason also is, that blockheads know not the difficulty,

culty, and that men of spirit love to surmount it.

Besides, you are a military man, Marquis, and ought you not to agree with my maxim, about talents? Suppose you should obtain the conduct of a siege, on the approaching campaign, would you be pleased that the governor, from an opinion that the town was not tenable, should surrender, before you could have any opportunity of signalizing yourself? I know you would not. You would have him hold out. The more care he takes of his own glory, the higher he raises yours.

In love, as well as war, the pleasure of conquest is measured by the difficulty. Shall I speak out? I am tempted to carry the parallel farther. This is the danger of entering into such subjects. The true merit of a woman, consists perhaps less, in not yielding at all, than in making
such

such a defence, as may intitle her to the honours of war.

To proceed. If a woman has had the misfortune to be overcome, what fetters can she forge, to bind the successful lover, if she be deficient in sense or talents! I acknowledge indeed, that female education is not over rich in these endowments. Yet, if you consider the matter a little, you'll agree, that there is hardly any woman, who with proper application of time and common sense, might not procure some one or more of those advantages: the difference lying only, in the more or less.

But we are naturally too indolent for such spirited efforts. We find beauty to be an universal merit. This method of winning hearts, requires no manner of trouble, and we could wish there were no other. Blind that we are! we never consider that though beauty and talents equally

qually gain admirers; the first endangers the possessor, while the latter serves for their defence.

In reality, beauty prepares but mortification and regret, against the quick period of its decay. Would you know the reason? because it has betrayed us into a neglect of more permanent attractions. During its frail empire, we find ourselves prized, sought, and celebrated. We hold our court. Our short sight foresees no end of admiration.—But, oh! the solitude, horrible, when age or accident shall have wrested from us, the poor, the only stay of our dominion! I could wish then, (the allusion is not elegant, but it will express my sense) that beauty served only as a *sign*, to declare the *entertainment* within.

Let us conclude therefore, Marquis, that in love; sense and talents are of the highest consequence. This is a *comedy*, in which the

the *acts* are the shortest, and the *interludes* the longest of any. How shall we amuse the intervals of dalliance, without the resources of the understanding? Possession places all women on a level, and subjects them equally to your inconstancy. The beautiful have in this particular, but little advantage over the homely. Sense and accomplishments make the chief difference between them. These alone supply that charming variety, in love and life, which relieves from tediousness and disgust.

In fine, nothing but the improvement of the understanding, can replenish that irksome void in the heart, which is consequent upon a passion gratified.—Nor is there any thing which can possibly be more serviceable to us, in whatever situation we may happen to be circumstanced; whether in retarding our defeat, in rendering it more richely prized, or in assisting us to regain our empire. Even
our

our lovers reap advantage from them: How many accomplishments should they encourage in us, though they turn at first, against themselves? Thus the Countess by cultivating her excellent talent for music, acts equally agreeable both to your interest and her own.

I have read over my letter, dear Marquis, and am afraid you will think it too grave and philosophic. This is the consequence of bad company. I supped last night with Monsieur de la Rochefaucault, and I never part from him, without being infected after this manner, for a day or two, at least.

Adieu.

L E T T E R XXIX.

I Agree with you, Marquis, that the Countess punishes you too severely, for the confession you have surprized her into. Is it your fault that she could not preserve her

her own secret? She has, however, advanced too far for a retreat now. We will indulge her in a few mortifying reflections on the occasion; but to carry it so far as to refuse your visits for three days, to direct them to tell you that she was retiring into the country for a month, and to return your tender billets with unbroken seals, is in my opinion, a very caprice of virtue. But after all, prithee despair not. If she was really indifferent, trust me she would be less severe.

Do not mistake the matter—upon such occasions, women are less out of humour with the lover than themselves. They are mortified to find their weakness is ready to betray them every moment: they therefore, punish you, and consequently themselves, at the same time, by an affected reserve. But be assured that one day's caprice of this sort, advances more the lover's success, than a whole year of his own

own assiduity. The generous fair one soon begins to reproach herself, for the dissingenuousness of her behaviour, she quickly perceives the injustice of her conduct, she would make reparation for it, and rushes unawares, into the contrary extreme.

I am surprized at that part of your letter, where you say, that since the Countess has appeared to love you, her character has been intirely changed. The cause of this alteration, I am quite unacquainted with. All I know is, that she has of late presented herself to the world, a perfect *Lady Townly*, and so gay a life has been the more remarkable, as her conduct was the very reverse, while her husband lived. You remember when you were first acquainted with her, that she was lively, even to excess; heedless, haughty, coquetish; and appeared perfectly incapable of a serious attachment. And you tell me now, that she is become grave and reserved; that

that she seems to be absent, timid and obliging: sentiment has succeeded to dissipation, and natural manners have taken the place of affected ones. In fine, she appears to enter so well into her present character, that you conclude it to be her real one; and that the former, was but a borrowed part.

All this would certainly puzzle my philosophy, if I could not account for the metamorphose, as an effect of love. I am much mistaken, if the opposition you meet with at present, be not an earnest of the most complete victory to you; which is the more assured, because she has taken every measure in her power, to dispute it with you.

If you still keep your object in view, if you suffer no time or place to escape you, so as that she may remark the assiduity of your regards—if you refrain from urging,
 • for

for a while, your passion, preserving at the same time, an attentive, respectful, but enamoured air, what must be the consequence? She cannot withhold from you that regard which one is naturally inclined to pay, in such circumstances, even to a person, one is indifferent to. Women besides, have an inexhaustible fund of kindness, for those who love them; which you men are perfectly well apprized of; and 'tis this that keeps up your spirits, when we appear to use you ill. You know that your presence, your assiduities, and the dejected air you assume, have their effect, and conquer at length our disdain. You conclude, that those whom our virtue keeps at the greatest distance, are certainly those, who alarm it the most.—And unluckily, your sentiment is but too just.

Our prudence keeps us aloof, where we apprehend the engagement may be to our disadvantage: we do sometimes more, even

ven brave the enemy, whose attack we dare not wait for. In a word, the courage of a woman is always capable of a first effort ; but rarely repeats it. The very excess of its violence, is often the cause of its subsiding too soon. The mind has but a certain degree of strength, and when that is exhausted by its own exertion, it naturally sinks into indolence ; and the apprehension of its own weakness, discourages it from any further activity. A person may support the first onset of an enemy, with resolution, whom the experienced difficulty may deter, on the second.

A woman, persuaded that she has tried every thing in her power, to defend herself from a passion which inthralls her, and satisfied with the conflicts she has already sustained, begins soon to conclude, that all further resistance against the force of love, must be in vain ; and if she still holds out, it is not from any resource, yet remaining

maining within herself : her security arises from the opinion of her chastity, with which she has inspired the lover, and the despair which her long resistance may have possessed him with.

So that every prudent woman should begin with making a good defence ; and pride alone is sufficient to spirit them up to this. But unhappily, ye foresee the means of conquest.—Persevere, and they are not impregnable.—And ye are so shamefully indelicate, that provided ye obtain the prize, ye remain indifferent, whether your success be owing to opportunity, or free consent.

In fine, Marquis, the extreme precaution the Countess uses against you, proves sufficiently your power over her. Were you an object indifferent to her, would she take such pains to fly you ? I promise you she would not pay you so great a compliment. But lovers are unaccountable

crea-

creatures.—always ingenious to torment themselves, the habit of occupying the mind with one dear object only, is so strong in them, that they would rather think of it disagreeably, than not at all.

However, I have great compassion for you. Smitten as you are, your situation is most dolorous. My poor Marquis, how they use it!

Adieu.

LETTER XXX.

I AM pleased at finding, before I set out for the country, that you begin to appear somewhat more tranquil in your mind. I frankly confess, that if the Countess had persevered in her severity, I should have imagined, not that she was insensible, but that some more lucky rival had intervened. Such a resistance would have appeared beyond the power of reason, sup-

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posing

posing her to have sustained the siege alone : for be assured, Marquis, that a woman is never more untractable, than when the disdain she manifests to other admirers, arises from the particular attachment she may have towards a favoured lover.

What you tell me, however, convinces me that you are beloved, and you alone are so. I shall soon be able to give you certain and constant accounts of this matter, for I am resolved to examine the Countess in person, myself. This declaration, doubtless surprizes you ; but your astonishment will cease, when I tell you, that Madame de la Sabliere's villa, whither I am going to spend a week, joins the estate of your amiable widow ; and you inform me that she has already set out for the country. Add our vicinity to the extreme desire I have to be acquainted with her, and you will no longer be surprized at the promise I have now made you.

They

They will not give me time to finish my letter, nor even to send it. I must set out this instant.—My fellow traveller rallies me, and fancies I am penning a billet-doux.—I let her amuse herself, but shall carry this letter with me, to finish in the country.

Adieu.

P. S. It seems then, that Madame de Grignan's illness is to prevent your paying us a visit in our retirement.

From the Chateau de - - - - -

I write to you from the Countess's, my dear Marquis.—This is the third day I have passed here. You may judge from this, that I am on good terms with your beloved fair. She is really an amiable woman: I am quite charmed with her. I sometimes doubt whether you deserve to possess such a heart as hers. Behold me

D 2

now,

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now, her chosen confidante.—She has told me all her sentiments of you, and I do not despair of being able to discover the motives of that inconsistency, which you have remarked in her character, before I return to Paris.

I dare not say more to you at present.—I may be surprized while I am writing; and I would not have it even suspected, that I correspond with you from hence.

In haste,—Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

I Have something to tell you, Marquis, worth attending to. I was resolved to keep my word with you; and while I was framing my address, in order to extract the secret from the Countess, a lucky chance saved me any farther trouble. You know the confidence she places in Monsieur de la Sabliere. She was just now with him in one of the arbours of her garden: I crossed a parterre to join them, and was near the door when I heard your name mentioned. I stopt short, and was not perceived: I overheard every word, and am now retired to give you a literal account of the whole conversation.

“ I have not been able, it seems, (said she) to hide from your penetration, my regards for the Marquis de Sevigné; and you cannot reconcile the seriousness of a

settled passion, with the liveliness of my former character. But you will be much more astonished, when I inform you that my exterior behaviour marks not my true character; that the gravity which surprises you at present, is but a recurrence to my real self; and in a word, that I have only assumed the appearance of a *fine Lady*, through design.

“ Perhaps you imagine, that women can disguise only their imperfections; but they sometimes carry it farther, Sir, of which I am myself one example: they can disguise even their virtues! And since I have entered upon it, I am tempted, at the hazard of tiring your patience, to acquaint you with the singular process, which conducted me to this point.

“ During my husband's life, I lived intirely in the country. You knew the Count, and his love of retirement. Upon
his

his death, I thought it proper to come a little into the world ; but was for some time embarrassed about the fittest character for me to appear in. I examined myself closely.—There is no equivocating with one's self.—I found my love of social pleasures strong ; but governed at the same time by a firm resolve, to preserve a pureness of moral throughout. How to blend these happily together, became then the question. It appeared to me an extreme difficulty, to frame any system of conduct, that without laying me open to the censure of the world, on one hand, should not deprive me of its most flattering pleasures, on the other.

“I reasoned with myself thus. Destined to associate among men, formed to please them, and partake a mutual happiness together, we must expect to suffer likewise from their faults ; and the one we have chiefly to reproach them with, is their

ungenerous calumny. One would imagine that the whole scheme of our education, was to render us compleat objects of love; and in truth, this is the only passion which is permitted us: yet, by a most unaccountable and severe contradiction, they leave us a right to, but one sort of fame, which is that of resisting all the impulses of this very passion. I deliberated then with myself, about the best measures for accommodating my conduct to such opposite extremes, at the same time; and found myself surrounded by difficulties on all sides.

“ We are simple enough, thought I, on our first entrance into life, to conceive the highest felicity, to consist in mutual love: we then suppose this passion to be founded on esteem, sustained by the acknowledgment of every amiable quality, refined by the most perfect delicacy of sentiment, unfulled by the least idea, *unseraphic*;

phic; and finally, corroborated by the reciprocal confidence, and unrestrained overflowings of two fond, chaste, and faithful hearts, now melted into one. But, unfortunately, this image, so flattering for our sex, flies from us, like an *Utopian* dream, whene'er we try to fold it in our embrace. We are *soon* undeceived—and yet generally too *late*.

“ At my first observations on men, I was child enough to be equally scandalized at their inconstancy and treachery: but, upon reflection, one must agree, that the first of these is rather an *imperfection*, than a *fault*, and renders themselves more *unhappy*, than *guilty*. When 'tis considered of what stuff their hearts are made, one cannot expect that first impressions shall preclude all future forms. But, are we to grant the same indulgence to their other vice? Most men attack us in cool blood, to make us serve for their amusement,

ment, or to sacrifice us to their vanity ; —to fill up the vacation of an idle life, or to atchieve a sort of character, at the ungenerous expence of ours. The greater number are of this kind : and how shall one be able to distinguish them from genuine lovers ? Outward appearances are both the same ; and he who *feigns* a passion, has odds against him, who *feels* it.

“ We are besides, silly dupes enough to consider love as our principal concern, while you men treat it as an amusement only. We rarely yield our persons without our hearts, while you are indelicate enough to make *desire* supply the place of *passion*. We believe constancy to be a duty ; you change upon the first disgust. You scarce preserve decency in quitting a mistress, the possession of whom, six months before, constituted your chief happiness and pride ; while the forsaken fair one may not ill compound, if the faithless lover

ver does not give her still further reasons to repent her confidence in him.

“ These reflections then, wrought up my mind to the most serious philosophy ; and I thus went on debating :—If love draws such a train of evils after it ; a woman, who has any manner of esteem for her reputation or repose, should cancel this passion quite out of her scheme of life. But how to compound the matter with our hearts ! Our hearts are formed for love, and love is itself involuntary ! How then annihilate a passion interwoven with our nature ? our sole resource must be to regulate it. Let us deliberate upon the best means of compassing so desirable an end.

“ What kind of love is most dangerous ? Certainly that which occupies the soul intire, which swallows up all other passions, renders us incapable of any other sentiment, and disposes us to sacrifice every thing to the object beloved.

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"Which are the characters susceptible of such affections? Without doubt the most solid ones; those of the least outward shew; those which unite together the best sense with the noblest mind, and most elevated sentiment.

"What kind of men are the most formidable to a woman of this complexion? Those who possess no other shining qualities but what are sufficient to place social merit in its proper light.* Persons of this stamp are always dangerous company for a woman of thought and reflection. 'Tis true, that they are very rare now-a-days, and that there never was, perhaps, an age more secure than the present, for defending

* The sense of this passage does not occur at first reading; but the meaning appears to be, that the most brilliant qualities are not often the most amiable; and that those, which without alarming, insensibly win upon the affections, have generally the surest effect.

us from the dominion of extraordinary passions. But some chance, however, may unluckily throw such an adventure in one's way.

“Moral philosophers agree, that we every one of us are born with a certain portion of sensibility, destined to be exercised upon some particular object or other.—Women of sense are not to be won by any of those trivial accomplishments which captivate the generality of their sex. But when an object worthy of their attention presents itself, they quickly comprehend its intire merit. Their attachments are measured by the extent of their understanding.—They are incapable of middling affections. We should therefore keep clear of such female characters as these, and likewise avoid the acquaintance and converse of such men, as I have just described, if we would consult the ease of our hearts, and peace of our minds.

“How

“How then to frame a system of conduct which may procure us this two-fold advantage, at the same time, — to preserve us from too deep impressions, and keep those persons at a distance, who are capable of inspiring them? Let us assume such an outward behaviour, as may at least discourage men from exerting any of their most estimable qualities before us. Let us subject them to the mortifying necessity of attempting to win us by trivial address, and drawing-room accomplishments: the ridiculous affectation of which may serve to supply us with shields against their assaults. What kind of intrenchment may we throw ourselves into, in order to stand covered by so many bulwarks? Even the shallow province of a *fine lady*.

“You must be doubtless surprized, at the singular result of such philosophic reasonings; but you will be much more so, when you shall hear me argue in form to
 prove

prove the justness of this resolve. Lend your ears a little longer patience. — I know the excellence of your judgment, nor do I think myself quite deficient in understanding, notwithstanding the frivolous character I have for some time sustained; and by the time I shall have finished my harangue, flatter myself that we may both be of accord upon this topic.

“Do you imagine that an outward severity of manners can defend the heart from its foibles? Wretched resource! When a woman once becomes a victim to her weakness, she must be only the more humbled, in proportion to the character she had before attempted to impose upon the world. The higher pride she had placed in her virtue, the greater advantage she affords to malicious censure.

“What ideas besides, do the world generally form of a virtuous woman?
Are

Are not men disingenuous enough to imagine, that the chastest woman is she who can best conceal her weakness; or by a forced retreat puts it out of her power to fall a sacrifice to it? They carry still their want of charity farther, so much afraid are they of admitting the least kind of perfection in us, even to suppose that we continue in a state of constant warfare with ourselves, while we maintain any manner of struggle with them. There never was a modest woman, says a certain friend of ours,* who was not weary of her condition.

“ And after all, what præmium is the reward of those self-denials they suppose we condemn ourselves to? Do they raise altars to such heroic efforts? Not a single sod! The best character, according to them, is that which passes through life

* Rochefaucault.

unnotic'd.^b That is, a perfect indifference on their part, and a profound oblivion, is the highest price the world sets upon our virtue. Must we not have an inexhaustible stock, to preserve it upon such conditions? Might not such hard measure tempt one to decline the conflict? But there are some serious considerations, which demand our attention.

“ Dishonour treads close upon the heels of frailty. Age is wretched enough in itself.—What a state then, must it be, when passed in infamy and remorse! What price too high for an exemption? At first thought, I concluded that there was no other security from these ills, but by con-

^b Pope says,

“ Most women have no characters at all.”—

“ Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear;

“ And best distinguish'd by black, brown, or fair.”

Young also,

“ Their highest praise, to live and die unknown.”

demning

demning one's self to a retired and austere life, and I did not perceive my philosophy sturdy enough to encounter it. But upon farther consideration, I determined within myself, that the masque of a *fine lady* would be the best dress for a woman to appear in, who would reconcile pleasure and virtue together. By your smiling, I perceive that you look upon my proposition as a paradox; but believe me there is more consistency in it, than one might at first imagine.

“ Is a *fine lady* required to have any attachment? Does any one expect tenderness or sensibility from her? 'Tis sufficient if she be but agreeable, and accomplished in mere outward demeanour. If she carries herself with gaiety and spirit, through the character she hath taken upon her to personate, who troubles themselves whether she has a heart, or no? Person, air, caprice, fashionable chat, frolic, and
par-

particular whims, are the only things expected from her. She may be as virtuous as she pleases, without interruption. Suppose a man should take it into his head to attack her; a slight resistance would quickly make him *raise the siege*; he would conclude the place to be already won, and wait patiently his turn. His perseverance might rather hurt him: it would betray an ignorance of the deference due to measures taken before his summons; so that after an extraordinary manner, she may owe her safety, meerly to the ill opinion that is conceived of her.

“ I perceive by your countenance what you are going to say,—That the character of a *fine lady* might injure my reputation, and leave me subject to those very inconveniences I would avoid. Is not this your objection? But don't you know, Sir, that the most strict conduct may not be sufficient to screen us from malice and slander?

Men

Men are generally the arbiters of our fame; and the good as well as bad opinions they frame of us, are often equally false. Prejudice or accident determine their judgments; and our credit depends frequently, less upon real merit, than on the luckiness of circumstances. The hope of obtaining an honourable rank then, in their heraldry, should be the least part of our incitement to a virtuous life: our first inducement ought to be, the standing well with our own minds, and to be able to say to one's self, *Whatever may be the opinion of the world, I have, thank Heaven, nothing to reproach my own heart with.* But after all, virtue is *the one thing needful*, and the motives are very little material.

“ I remained convinced then, upon the whole, that I could not conduct myself more prudently, on setting out in the world, than by putting on the vizard which I had deemed fittest, both for my safety and repose.

pose. I attached myself more closely to the friend who had assisted me with her counsels. This was the Marchioness de, my relation. Our conformity of sentiments and manners, was perfect; we frequented the same company: charity for our neighbour, was not, in truth, our favourite virtue. We entered the circle as the sole maskers at a ball; we trifled away our time there, and led others into the rendering themselves ridiculous: and after we had sufficiently amused ourselves with this farce, our entertainment did not end here; it was renewed again, when we retired together, to our dear *tête à tête*.—How silly the women appeared, and what empty creatures the men! What fopperies, what impertinencies! If perchance, among the crowd, we happened to detect a person capable of making himself feared—that is, esteemed—we disconcerted him by our airs, by the slight notice we affected to take of him, and by the preference we seemed

seemed to give to those who merited it the least. In fine, in order to preserve our happy insensibility, we made constant choice of the most insignificant company we could pick up.

“ This conduct preserved us for a long time, from the dangerous shoals of love, and relieved us also, from that irksome tediousness of life, which a more formal and puritanical virtue would have subjected us to. Trifling, heedless, volatile, — you may add coquettish, if you will, before the world; but serious, rational, and virtuous, in our own eyes, we compounded with ourselves for our outward character. The generality of men we met with, were not much to be apprehended; and those who gave us the least alarm, were obliged to play the fool, to be admitted or accepted of in our society.

“ However, there has at length happened

pened an adventure, which has brought me to suspect the sufficiency of my scheme of conduct; for I find that it has not been able intirely to guard me from the danger I sought to shun. My own experience has convinced me, that love is an invader, who by surrounding us on all sides, is sure to find some unguarded post to make his entrance at: I know not by what destiny the Marquis de Sevigné has rendered all my projects fruitless: In spite of all my outguards, he has surprized the avenues of my heart. Whatever resources I have summoned to my aid, he has had the fortune to win over to his party, and my reason, instead of assisting me in the conflict, has but betrayed me to the victor.

“ I shall not, however, repine at his conquest, if he should not give me other cause to lament it. He has won upon my weakness so far, that I have not been able to conceal my sentiments from him; and
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the only concern I have at present, is, lest he should imagine that I have not hitherto *personated* an insignificant character, but *performed* a real one. And though my throwing off this disguise, may perhaps render me less amiable in his eyes—for I do affirm, that superficial qualities generally captivate men, more than solid ones,—I would, however reveal myself to him in my genuine character: for, I should blush to owe his affections to mock appearances, belying both my heart, mind, and understanding.”

“I am, Madam, (replied Monsieur de la Sabliere) still less surprized at the novelties of your project, than at the address with which you have been able to render so singular a notion plausible. I really think that it is impossible to ramble with more method. But you have not met with the general fate of projectors, who take round-about ways to avoid the beaten track,

track, yet fall into the same inconveniences often, with the common high road traveller. Now to make use of the privilege you have allowed me, of speaking my opinion freely; believe me, Madam, that the best means of insuring your repose, is ever to act up, without disguise, to the character of a rational creature. One is always sure to be a gainer, upon any manner of composition with virtue."

When I perceived the conversation begin to take this serious turn, I apprehended that it might be drawing toward a conclusion; and therefore hastily retired without being detected, and have given myself the pleasure of satisfying your curiosity, according to promise.

Did you ever see so long a letter? We shall return to Paris, in two days.

Adieu.

LETTER XXXIII

WELL, Marquis, we are returned again, at last; but the *advices* we bring you, will be very far from welcome. You never in your life had a fairer occasion of accusing women of caprice. My last letter was to assure you that we loved you mightily; and the present is to inform you of the contrary. We have taken strange resolutions against you.—Tremble—for it is a point determined:

The Countess, in short, is resolved to love you for the future, intirely at her ease, and without the least expence to her reputation or repose. She has foreseen the consequences of such a flame as yours, and cannot reflect upon them without terror. She has, therefore, taken the pious resolution of arresting its further progress. Let not the proofs she has indis-

creetly

creedly given you of her regards, flatter you with the least manner of hope. You men imagine that after a woman has once confessed her passion, she has lost the power to break her chain. You deceive yourself in this. The Countess is more mistress of herself in this particular, than perhaps you may imagine; and I own ingenuously, that to my friendly counsels she is indebted for some part of her firmness.

You must reckon no longer upon my letters; and in truth you will not have much farther occasion for them, toward helping you to a thorough knowledge of women. I begin to repent me, that I have supplied you with too many arms already, against them; without which, do you imagine you would ever have won the Countess? I confess that I have hitherto, judged too severely of my sex,

and here offer up my palinade.* I am truly sensible of my *libel* at present. There are, I believe, among women, more real and essential virtues, than I had heretofore imagined. What depth of understanding! What a constellation of estimable qualities is our charming friend possessed of! No, Marquis, I could not withhold from her my tenderest affections; and without the smallest regard to your interests, I have most cordially entered into the strongest alliance with her, offensive and defensive, against you.

You may resent my defection; but has not the confidence she has reposed in me, a right to claim the strictest fealty? I will not even conceal my treachery from you.—I have betrayed you so far, as really to apprize her of those advantages, you might possibly profit yourself of, from

* A classical term for a recantation.

the secrets I have let you into, of the female breast.

“ I perceive (said she) how formidable a lover is likely to be, who joined to a perfect knowledge of the heart, possesses at the same time, the engaging talent of explaining and expressing his passion, with address and sentiment. What effect may he not have, upon a woman who reflects and discerns ? I know it ; 'tis by the assistance of her very understanding, that he wins her. He has the art to employ her own wit against herself, to justify to her reason the errors he is betraying her into.

“ A mistress, besides, thinks herself bound to sacrifices in proportion to the merit of her lover. With an ordinary one, a weakness is a weakness, and we blush for it ; but with an extraordinary one, 'tis a tribute due to his desert ; and

is also a proof of our own discernment.— It compliments our taste, and we are proud to own it. Thus by adding to our vanity, what is lopped off from virtue, we become quite insensible to the lapses of our own weakness.” These are, at present, the cautious sentiments of the Countess, and I perceive not the least gleam of hope for you, dawning through them.

I acknowledge that it might have been better to have made these reflections between ourselves, without letting you at all into the secret; and this was truly our first resolve. But could I act so disingenuous a part, to operate underhand against you? Would not this have been the height of perfidy? Besides, by so clandestine a proceeding, we might have betrayed some fear about the danger, and you see me have bravery enough to advise you of our very plan of defence. Come on then, Marquis; our expectation of the attack

attack rises even to impatience.—Would you learn why?—Because we can now attend your march, without a pulse-beat. Do not flatter yourself it is any longer a tender mistress you have to cope with.—This would be too weak an adversary.—Such a courage is not much to be depended on. No—'tis me—a champion in cool blood, who thinks herself engaged in honour to support the weaker efforts of her friend and ally.—Yes—I can pry into the secret foldings of your heart, spy out its sinister aims, parry them, and render fruitless every artifice of your machinations. Accuse me of treachery, if you will; but come to us this evening, and I will convince you of the perfect equity and impartiality of my conduct, throughout this whole affair.

While your inexperience needed to be informed, encouraged, and sustained, my zeal for your service induced me to sacri-

fice every thing to your interests. The
 Countess had, at that time, every advan-
 tage on her side. The complexion of af-
 fairs is quite altered. All her pride, at
 present, is hardly sufficient to defend her.
 Formerly she had her own indifference,
 and what was still safer, your bad address,
 in her favour. You are now, a perfect
 master of galantry; while she is scarcely
 mistress of — herself. In such circum-
 stances, to have continued the war with
 you against her, betray the confidence she
 had placed in me, refuse her the succour
 she had a right to call for, if you have the
 least ingenuoufness in you, would by your
 own confession, have been a crying sin. I
 would, then, for the future, repair the
 mischief I may have done in revealing
 our secrets, and initiating you into our
 mysteries.

I know not how it is, but I really feel
 such a pleasure in traversing your amour

in

in this place, that one would imagine I had undertaken it from some self-interested view of my own: but you know how far only my pretensions upon you extend.— My sentiments toward you shall ever continue the same; and on your part, I dare say that you are too candid, to suffer this activity for my friend, to diminish the least of your esteem for me. Adieu.— Fly to the Countess now, you have free leave.

LETTER XXXIII.

WHAT Marquis, a couple of women then, have frightened you! You despair at once, of success, because such redoubted Amazons have taken arms against you! See, see him flying from the field! Who would have taken him for so poor a soldier!

However, I must confess, that the firmness of the Countess, did even astonish me.—I was really surprized at the resolution with which she withstood for a whole evening, your vows, your protestations, and most earnest instances. For my part, I own, that I never beheld your address and manners so engaging; and she herself acknowledged to me since, that she never found you so formidable before. But, I may venture to answer for her now, since her courage flinched not, on so perilous
an

an occasion. My reflections carry me farther. The ease with which she supported her irony throughout, has almost brought me to suspect, that her heart has been but slightly grazed: had she been really wounded, she would not probably, have preserved so very cavalier an air.

In short, I have amused myself this morning, with a whimsical thought; that it would be ridiculous enough, if while we are diverting ourselves with your pains, you should discover that your tender Adelaide had conceived but a middling degree of liking for you. What a stroke to your vanity!—Though there are yielding fair enough to repair the loss.—How often will your pique cry out, “What is the heart of woman! Define the jilting composition who can.”

But after all, let me assure you that I have some compassion for you, and if I

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should

should find this matter having too deep an effect upon your mind, I cannot say what I may do to mitigate your misfortune. But I know your philosophy. The first transports of resentment over, you will soon perceive that the best card you have to play in this desperate game, is to restrain your passion within the common bounds of friendship; which is a condition that we now most generously tender you. What a happy composition is here, when your dismissal might have been absolute! However, do not plume yourself too highly, upon this advantage.—You might not have received such quarter, if we had any farther danger to apprehend from you.

Adieu Marquis.—The Countess, who is sitting by my side, says many kind things of you. She was particularly pleased with the complaisance of your late behaviour toward us. No longer to press an argument when two ladies appeared
against

against you, was the very pink of courtesy, and politeness, truly. Such extreme delicacy must surely in the end, disarm their opposition, and at length, excite their compassion. Hope;—this we have not yet prohibited you.

Postscript, from the Countess.

Though it should encourage the most flattering hopes in you, Marquis, I cannot resist the temptation of adding a few lines, at the bottom of my friend's letter. I have not read it, but suspect that I may be the subject of her epistle. I have a mind to give it you under my hand, that we shall pass this day alone together. I would acquaint you also, that though I have but a slight regard for you, at present, I shall every day, endeavour to render it less. However, if you have courage enough left, to break in upon our tête à tête party, I give you fair warning, that

your

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your danger will be great; for they flatter me that I am infinitely handsomer to-day than you ever yet saw me; and I can assure you that I never in my life found so strong a disposition in myself, to use you abominably, as at this present writing.

In the mean time, Adieu.

Though I should encourage the most
flattering hopes in you, Madam, I can
not resist the temptation to add a few
words to the bottom of my letter, which
I have not read, but suspect that I may
be the subject of his epistle. I have
not to give it you under my hand, that
we shall pass this day alone together. I
know, and you will also, that though I
have but a slight regard for you, at pre-
sent, I shall every day endeavour to ren-
der it less. However, if you have no age
enough left to pick it up on our side,
I give you my warning, that
you

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

THIS business begins now, to be rather serious, Marquis.—I insist upon an explication. Do you speak ingenuously in your letter, by hinting that you imagine I have been actuated in this affair, through jealousy only; and that I have endeavoured to interrupt your commerce with the Countess, merely to take some private advantage of the rupture?—You have either a very bad heart, or a most excellent head. The first, if you can possibly think me capable of such a double dealing; and the latter, if you have but urged this charge, to create suspicion in my friend.

The alternative is equally injurious to me. The Countess has taken the matter seriously, and this embarrasses me to the last degree. You are really too many for us.

us.—You know the ascendancy you have over her heart, and could not possibly have exerted it in a surer manner, than by putting on the appearance of indifference. Not to deign an answer to my last letter, to fail the assignation we made you under our hands, to remain three days without seeing us; and then to write us such a stiff, cold letter! I must acknowledge Marquis, that all this is of a consummate politician,—'tis what is characterized under the common phrase of *un coup de maître*.

And accordingly, the most complete success has attended your hopes. The poor Courtes! though she withstood your *warmth*, could not hold out against your *coldness*. The apprehension lest this indifference might be real, has thrown her into the utmost inquietude. Come then, you Machiavel in love, come, and survey the work you have made. Come, and wipe

wipe off her falling tears.—Come, to triumph in your victory, and our defeat.

Gods! what is the most sensible woman in the world, when love has once taken possession of her heart! Why are you not here, a witness to the upbraidings she breathes out against me! For what cause, you'll say? Why truly, I have had it seems, in the first place, an injurious diffidence of her virtue; and in the second, a mistaken notion of your pretensions: I first supposed them criminal, and then took it into my head to punish you for them. I am severe, cruel, unjust, with many epithets more of the same kind, which she has heaped upon me.

What emotion! Well, take my word for it, that this shall be the last storm I shall ever sustain for intermeddling between you; and let me here most cordially renounce the confidence you have, each
of

of you, hitherto honoured me with. We advisers truly, in such cases, stand a most admirable *lay* of it! They solely are charged with every thing disagreeable in the quarrel, and the lovers enjoy the whole pleasure of the reconciliation.

However, upon reflection, I think myself weak to have any manner of relentment upon this occasion. You are a couple of children, whose waywardness ought rather to amuse me. I should regard you each with a philosophic eye, and continue still my friendship to you both. Come hither then, immediately, and acquaint me if you acquiesce in this resolve of mine. Come away, and drop the *petty tyrant*, for the present. Let us make peace, and frame a triple alliance together. My poor dear infants! One of them has such innocent views, and the other so secure in virtue, that to keep them

any

any longer asunder, would be a *cruelty*,
founded on *injustice*.

Farewel.

LETTER XXXV.

I See plainly Marquis, that the only way
to preserve terms with women, even of
the best understanding and virtue, is ne-
ver to interfere in their love affairs. I
have taken my resolution; and for the
time to come, shall never mention your
name to the Countess, unless she wrests it
from me.—I hate altercation.—However,
this resolve shall not in the least affect my
sentiments toward you, any more than the
friendship I shall ever preserve for her.
But though I remain her ally, I shall make
it no scruple to hold on my commerce with
you, in the same free manner as usual;
and shall continue, since you press it, to
give you my opinions, upon every circum-
stance of life, you shall propose to me:
but

but upon this condition be it; that I may not be denied the liberty of laughing sometimes, at your expence.

However, this privilege I cannot make use of at present; for if the Countess adheres to her resolution, which is not to see you alone, I do not perceive that your affairs are likely to afford me much variety. She perfectly remembers what I used lately to tell her: she knows her heart, and has reason to fear it. She must be a very imprudent woman indeed, who confides in her own forces, and dares expose herself without apprehension, to the solicitations of a man she likes. Nothing is so dangerous as the presence, as the approach of an object beloved. The emotion that animates, the warmth with which the intire person is, as it were kindled up, awake the senses, inflame the mind, and excite desires. I said to the Countess, one day, that women may be compared to an harpsichord,

lichord, which ho'ever so well tuned, emits no sound, 'till the master's hand begins to operate. Touch but the keys, and the tones respond. Finish the parallel, and deduce your consequences.

But after all, what have you to complain of, my metaphysical friend? *To behold the Countess, to hold tender converse with her, to listen to the soft melody of her voice, to render her little assiduities, to spin the thread of sentiment to a hair, and to edify from her sublime lectures upon virtue; do not these, Marquis, constitute your supreme felicity?* Quit, quit to earthly souls, those groveling desires, which begin now to appear too plainly in you. To consider you in your present state, one would imagine that I was not much mistaken, when I hinted, that even the most refined passion, was but a more delicate effect of the senses. Your own

* See Letter ix. first paragraph, the *Italics*.

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experience has compelled you at length,
into my sentiments. I am not sorry for it.
I would have you mortified for your in-
credulity. Adieu.

P. S. The Chevalier, your old rival,
has resented the disdain of the Countess,
by throwing himself at the feet of the
Marchioness, her cousin. This choice is
a rare encomium on his taste. But they
were formed for one another. I shall
be curious enough to know how far
this hopeful passion may be able to carry
them.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

YOU imagine, Marquis, that I do not perceive all the irony of those compliments you pretend to make me, on my *feigned* reconciliation, as I fancy you suppose it, with the Countess. But in reality, we had never fallen out. She soon made an apology for some hasty reflections, imputed them all to love, and intreated me to continue still, my friendly counsels to her.

“But my good lady, what end will all my assistance answer, except to prepare a farther triumph for our antagonist! My opinion, in this *council of war*, is for quitting the field: for whatever confidence you may place in your own strength, flight only, can insure your safety.”

She imagines truly, that she has shewn an high instance of effort, in the last conversation

versation she held with you. But all women speak to their lovers, after the same manner.—“ I rest satisfied with your heart, they cry; your sentiments and esteem are all the aim of my ambition. There are women, I am afraid, indelicate enough to accept most willingly, what I refuse. For my part, I shall never envy them their prize.”² And so forth.

Take care Marquis, how you reject these refined notions, openly: To seem to suspect their sincerity upon such occasions, would be more than unpolite, it would be indiscreet. You should applaud and encourage their error, if you would profit of it. They would appear delicate, and sensible to every other pleasure, but those of sentiment and intellect only. This is their system;—this their very soul. Some certainly there are, who impose upon themselves in these opinions, but in truth, the generality of them only endeavour to impose upon you.

But

But whatever may be the reason for equivocating upon these occasions, is it not a very happy thing, that they take the trouble of deceiving you after this manner? What obligations should you not acknowledge to them? They give a value by this means, to the slightest favours, which without this artifice, would bear no price. You should admire our address. —By pretending an indifference, toward what you call the pleasures of love,—in carrying the affectation so far, as even to declare an aversion to them, we augment the merit of those sacrifices we are supposed to make you. We thus render you grateful, for the very obligations we are ourselves equally indebted to you for; and exact a tribute even from our conquerors. And since it has been decreed from the first, that we should still impose upon you, what acknowledgments do you owe us, for chusing the most agreeable manner of doing so? We but *cheat* you to your *gain*;

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and multiply difficulties, only to increase your triumph. Anxieties and cares are but the purchase of your pleasures. How flattering to your vanity, a pretence to boast, "This fair one, so delicate of sentiment, so cold to all impressions of sense; so nice, so jealous of her fame, now sacrifices to me her repugnance, her fears, and her pride. My merit, my personal accomplishments, my address, have won a fortress, impregnable to all other assailants. *Io triumphe! Io Pæan!* What victory! What glory!"

But if women on their part acted ingenuously; were they as unguarded in declaring their sentiments, as you are assiduous in penetrating them, you could not possibly make such a vain boasting to yourselves. What flattering pleasures would be at once destroyed! You ought never, therefore, to impute this reserve to them as a fault, from whence you reap such
. happy

THE MARQUIS DE SEVIGNE. 123

happy advantages. Feign rather to be imposed upon, nay assist in the deceit yourselves: It will but heighten and refine your pleasures.

If the Countess should happen to intercept this letter! what reproaches, what upbraidings should I again sustain!

Adieu.

F 2

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXVII.

I Know well enough, that a man of your rank, especially a young officer, is frequently tempted into bad company; and consequently, may sometimes be *arrested in his course*, by some of those *sirens* you hint at in your letter.^c However, notwithstanding such excuse, you have not guessed amiss; for I should certainly have given you a severe lecture upon this occasion, if I was not persuaded, that in the present situation of your heart, such *Circe's* cannot have magic enough to detain you long in chains, from the sole object of your constancy.^d

But the Countess resents it, you tell me; and I am not at all surprized at her

^c The Opera girls.

^d *Circe* was a sorceress, who detained *Ulysses* in his course, on his return to *Penelope*.

jealousy;

jealousy; as it but confirms my general opinion of your *metaphysical* females. You may judge from hence, the sincerity of their professions. Their resentment is of a singular nature truly!—For after all, what do these low bred mixens rob them of? They have not the least idea of *sensibility*; and the Countess, to be sure, is nothing else from top to toe.

Women are strangely inconsistent with themselves! They affect to despise these *mock heroines*, but betray a certain fear at the same time, that rises above contempt. And in reality, have they not reason to fear them? Are you not better pleased with the familiarity of their converse, than with the company of women in higher life; where attention, respect, and strict decorum must be observed? With the

“View them with scornful, yet with jealous eyes.”

POPE.

first, men are perfectly at their ease; they feel themselves in their natural state of freedom: with the latter, constrained, circumspect, and rehearsing as it were a part, they never chuse to perform. From the characters I have had of some of these *familiars*, I imagine them very capable of rendering a man truant in some particulars, even to the woman he loves best in the world; but then this infidelity, if one may give it so harsh a name, is seldom carried farther by a man of sense. They may excite a transient desire, but are incapable to fix a permanent passion.

These *dramatis personæ* might indeed be dangerous society, had they either in their wit or manners, a fund sufficient to entertain you in the progress, as much as they do on the commencement of their acquaintance. A little common-place chat, readiness of address, and superficial breeding, take you in at first. Ye have not the
least

least delicacy ! the freedom of their conversation, the liveliness of their manners, even the irregularity of their conduct, bewitch ye for the time ; a giddy, thoughtless transport, possesses itself of your senses ; and thus ye dream whole hours away, as minutes.

But happily for you, they have seldom substance enough to support a material part : they generally want education and improvement, and consequently soon run the course of their narrow circle. The same stories, the same conceits, and the same mimickries, recur again ; and one seldom laughs at the same jest twice, when some esteem for the person does not support the humour.

The Countess then, may be perfectly easy with regard to these galantries. I know you well enough, to be answerable for it, that such mistresses can never be able to

rival her. But, there are a certain sort of women, that may be truly dangerous to you, namely, your ladies of clandestine galantry. These are a kind of equivocal class in life, who hold a middle rank, between women of character, and those I have been speaking of. They associate with the former, and differ from the latter, only in appearances. More free than fond, they impose upon your sex, by lending to sentiments the least refined, a certain air of passion, which is mistaken for love. They have the art of stamping an impression of tenderness, upon the vulgar appetite for pleasure. They would make you believe, that it is from choice, upon a thorough conviction of your extraordinary merits, they surrender. If you are not aware of their true character, you will find it difficult to distinguish the motives of their kindness, from a real sensibility of heart; and be apt to mistake for an excess of passion, what is only a fever of the senses.

senses. You flatter yourself that you are accepted as a lover, when you are but invited as a galant.

These are the sort of women I should most suspect, for supplanting the Countess. The *financier's*^f widow, who has been lately introduced into her parties, is of this character. I perceived it the first evening we spent together; and in your former letter, you hint at some lures she let drop before you. Had not the Countess reason to be alarmed at these advances? Your passion for this latter, I do really believe at present, to be strong enough to induce you to sacrifice every consideration to it. But how long may it continue so? The lady we are speaking of, is handsome, has gaiety and spirit, and but just entered into that stage of life, when women willingly undertake the

^f A receiver general of the French revenues.

130 MADAME DE L'ENCLOS TO

charge of young men, introduce them into the world, and teach them their first lessons of galantry.

That tender and attentive air, with which she receives and accosts you, may have its effect. Be on your guard: remember I give you warning. Men unawares, attach themselves to such women, even while they are despising them; and they have the art, often to make ye do more silly things, than any other sort of women in the world.

Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXVIII.

I AM impatient to acquaint you Marquis, that I have been just now supporting an argument, against Monsieur *de la Bruyere*. Don't you admire at my assurance? It is true for all that. He said that *Corneille* has drawn the characters of mankind, as they ought to be, and *Racine* such as they really are. I maintained the direct contrary opinion. We had a very critical audience at this dispute; and I carried the question, upon a poll. This perhaps, I was not a little vain of. But the *pro* and *con* would take up too much of my letter.—Call to see me soon, and I may entertain you perhaps, with both sides of the argument. Every one has their own manner of painting things, and I have mine among the rest. I sketch out women just as I find them, and am sorry I cannot represent them as they would pretend to be. But to your letter.

The kind of languor that oppresses you, does not surprize me. The indisposition of the Marchioness, has deprived you of the opportunity of seeing her cousin; your heart has continued in the same situation, for three intire days: 'tis quite natural for such a circumstance to produce such an effect. Neither does the coolness you are sometimes susceptible of, toward the Countess, seem more extraordinary to me, than the former. In the fondest passions one is sensible, at times, of certain weary moments, which surprize even the persons themselves who are affected with them. Love has its *syncope's**, as well as other *diseases*. Whether the heart, fatigued with its own emotions, steals a refreshing nap; or that its attention is not steady enough for contemplating always the same object; it sometimes experiences its intervals of indifference, without being able in the

* A faintness or intermission of pulse.

least, to account for them. The stronger the *gust*, the profounder the *calm*: and this suspension, believe me, is often more fatal to love, than the very storm and tempest itself. This passion is extinguished by too strong, or too uniform a resistance. The generality of women have only one way of resisting: a woman of sense and cleverness does more;—she varies her modes of defence; and this is the very sublime of the art.

But the Countess, it seems, prefers the duties of friendship, to those of love; and this is a new reason for your coolness toward her. Love is a jealous and tyrannical sentiment, which is never satisfied, unless its object sacrifices to it every taste, every devoir, every passion. You have done nothing for it yet, while there remains still any thing more to be done. Prefer your duty, friendship, or any other social tie, but for an instant—it resents—it retaliates.

The

The forced compliments you pay to the *financiere*, are an instance of this unreasonable pique. I could wish however, that you had not carried it so far as to attend her on her last visit to the Countess. The time you staid with her there, the pleasure you appeared to shew in entertaining her, the questions she proposed to you, with regard to the situation of your heart—these things I say, prove the truth of my sentiments to you on this head in my last letter.

You may pretend if you please, that all this flirting, has but the more confirmed your passion for the Countess; but your embarrassment, when she asked you the next day, how long you had staid with the widow, when you escorted her home; the evasive answer you gave, and the pains you took to dispel her slightest doubts, sufficiently convince me that you are more guilty than you would acknowledge, or even than you really imagine yourself to be.

The

The Countess herself takes the affair in this light; for did you not observe the affectation with which she endeavoured to pique your love, by commending your old rival, the Chevalier? I may venture to promise for it, that you will not hastily fall back again into that lethargy you so lately complained of. Jealousy is preparing employment, sufficient to keep you awake.

But how can you make so light of the poor Marchioness's misfortune! You will soon find, that the small-pox has not altered her face alone: her temper will partake of the change, believe me, as soon as her glass informs her how great it is. How much I pity her! But, pity her whole sex, at the same time! With what cordiality will she hate, and tear them to pieces! Your Countess is at present, her dearest friend.—How long will she continue so, think you? She is really, an extreme pretty woman,

woman, and has a complexion so apt to make others look like gypsies! What envious breaches do I not foresee!

I forgot to commence a serious quarrel with you sir, for a piece of your ill behaviour to me. You have had the indiscretion to shew most of my late letters, to *Monsieur de la Rochefaucault*. I shall cease writing to you, if I find you cannot keep a secret. I speak my sentiments freely enough before him, in conversation; but one must be a good deal vainer than I am, who can flatter themselves that their writings may be able to stand the criticism of such a reader.

Farewel.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

THE redness, that the small-pox has left upon the charms of the unfortunate Marchioness, mortifies her extremely. I am not surprized at her purpose of retiring to the country, for some time: she is not really, in a fit condition to appear abroad. If this humbling accident had not happened, the Chevalier might not perhaps have found the siege so easy to carry, as it is probable he had at first imagined. May not this serve to prove, that women's virtue generally, depends upon circumstances, and diminishes always with their pride? ^a

But I am afraid of this example for the Countess. Nothing is more dangerous for

^a Here it may be observed, that Ninon's imagination is not at all phlegmatic. A slight matter serves her for proof. In this passage she supposes an event, and then reasons upon it, as a fact.

a wo-

a woman, than the frailty of her friend. Love, in itself already too alluring, obtains new vigour by contagion, if you'll allow me the expression. It is not from our hearts alone, it draws its forces: recruits are raised from many of the foreign objects that surround us. Guilty persons think it some screening of themselves, to lead others into the same snare. I am therefore, not at all surprized at the many kind things the Marchioness has lately said to her cousin, in your favour. Hitherto, they have both of them, conducted themselves upon the same principles.* What confusion then, must it be to her, if the Countess alone, should have reaped the benefit of them?

The Marchioness has besides, a further reason at present, more than another woman might have had, to contribute toward

* See the conversation of the Countess, with Monsieur de la Sablerie, Letter XXXI.

the defeat of her friend. She has lost her beauty, and may therefore be obliged, in order to preserve her lover, to make some condescensions, more than were requisite in her former state. Can she suffer, think you, that another should retain theirs, at a less expence? This would be submitting to a mortifying superiority: I am therefore convinced that she would run any length, to relax the moral of your charming *Adelaide*. Should she succeed, in good truth I tremble at the unluckiness of circumstances! To have been once, as handsome as our friend—to cease to be so any longer, our rival's charms each day improving—yet still to be condemned to appear in contrast with her! Oh sir! it is a trial, beyond our wisdom's strength! it baffles all philosophy! Among women, friendship cancels, or commences rivalships. I mean the contest for beauty only—it would be too much to add that of passion also.

I fore-

I foresee it with concern, but I must predict it to you. Whatever precautions the Countess may use, to sooth the misfortune of the Marchioness, she will make but an ungrateful return for. I don't know how it is, but every thing a pretty woman says upon such an occasion, to one who never was, or is no longer handsome, carries with it a certain air of compassion, which cancels all her kindness, and mortifies the person she would console. The more pains she takes to appear insensible of her superiority over the unfortunate object, the more she confirms it; and seems to confess a *subaltern merit* in the other, thro' charity, rather than the spontaneous will, with which we usually acknowledge *inferior charms*.^b

In truth Marquis, women seldom deceive each other by the mutual compli-

^b Damn with *faint* praise, commend with civil *leer*.

POPE.

ments

ments they pay. All of them know perfectly well, what rate to set upon civilities of this sort : so that as they speak without sincerity, they listen without gratitude : and should the female panegyrist be of the best faith in the world, in other particulars, the fair one whose beauty is praised, in order to judge of her veracity, attends less to her words, than her features. Is she homely ? we believe, and love the flatterer. Near our own rank of beauty ? we receive the compliment coolly, and disdain her. But, if handsomer—we hate her worse, even than we did before. In short, believe me, that while the pre-eminence of charms remains in contempt between two females, no perfect amity can ever be established. Can two merchants, who have the same goods lying on hands, enter into a strict friendship together ?

For want of this hint, the real cause of the want of cordiality among women, has
feldom

feldom been investigated. Those who appear the most fondly connected, often break for the smallest matter. Was it this trifle, think you, that occasioned the breach? It was only the pretext. We conceal the true motives of our actions, when the discovery may be to our advantage: we must never admit that the mortification, arising from our friend's beauty, had estranged us from her: this would be to betray our jealousy, our envy; and we would rather be deemed unjust, than yield our rival so high a triumph. Whenever two pretty women are so lucky, to meet with the least plausible occasion, of *ridding themselves* of each other, they lay hold of it with so much eagerness, and hate one another so cordially, that one may easily judge what sort of an affection had subsisted between them before.

Well Marquis, do I speak my mind freely enough to you? You see how far
my

my sincerity carries me. I endeavour to give you just notions of every thing, and am not sparing even of my own expence; for I am certainly, not more exempt than another, from the failings I describe. But as I trust, that all I have said will remain a secret between us, I am not afraid of bringing myself into a scrape with my sex, who would doubtless have great reason to resent my frankness. The Countess however, is above such disguises, and honestly confesses to the truth of my propositions.

How few women are there of this ingenuous nature!

Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R XL.

THE example of the Marchioness then, has had no effect yet, upon the heart of her friend ? It seems on the contrary, that the Countess keeps rather more on her guard against you ; and has resented some slight freedoms you have lately indulged yourself in with her.

I was in hopes that on this occasion, she would have reminded you of the former declarations of deference and disinterestedness, you made on the first overtures of your passion. This is the usual way in such cases. But what is very singular in this affair, is, that the same earnestness, which a woman looks upon as want of respect, on the commencement of an amour, shall pass with her for a proof of love and esteem, after the completion of it. Listen to wives and mistresses, attend to their repining
mur-

murmurs, against careless husbands and lukewarm lovers: you'll find their complaints generally to be, that they have *lost their esteem*; and they impute their coldness to this alone. But among ourselves, what they imagine to be tokens of respect and esteem, are they not the very reverse of such sentiments?

I have told you long ago, that women, would they honestly confess, make love, to consist in warm desire, even more than men do. Observe a mistress, on the commencement of her passion and love is then an *idea*, purely metaphysical; in which the senses have not the least manner of concern. Like the stoic philosophers, who in the midst of torments, would not confess their pain, she remains some time a martyr to her own system: 'till at length, love becomes triumphant, and nature will prevail.

After this, the lover would have
 Vol. II. G much

much business truly, to play back her metaphysical theory upon her. "That this refined passion exists solely in sublime conceits, and spiritual intercourse: that it would be degrading its abstract and celestial nature, to impure it with any thing merely human or material," &c.

He may boast his superstitious reverence and devotion—in vain.—The preaching priest will never be admitted to sacrifice at our altars, believe me. His *respect* would be taken for affront, his *delicacy* for derision, and his *fine-spun barangues* for disingenuous evasions. All the credit he could expect, would be, that she may, perhaps, suppose his having had less delicate engagements with some other fair one, might have reduced him to the sad necessity of parading these chimera's before his *mistress—in name only*. And what is admirable upon such occasions, is, that the very apology they supply him with, proceeds from the same principle.

I see

I see what deference you have for my commands: you have not only exposed my letters to Monsieur de la Rochefaucault, but you read them in public company. It is true, that the partial opinion of my friends upon them, makes me some amends for your indiscretion; and in truth, I think my best way is to proceed without reserve, as before. But at least, I hope you will have proper caution whenever I say any thing, in which the honour of the Countess is concerned. Without this condition, you must expect no more letters from

NINON.

G 2

LETTER.

LETTER XLI.

NO Marquis, say what you will, I cannot forgive you that extreme impatience, with which you press, for what you stile your supreme felicity. Ignorant as you are, will you never be persuaded, that when you are secured of a woman's heart, it should be your chief pleasure to enjoy her defeat for some time, before you compleat it? You are a perfect novice, if you do not know, that of all pleasures, those of love require to be husbanded with the greatest œconomy. Were I a man, and had the fortune to win a heart, I mean such a one as the Countess's, with what parsimony would I use my advantage! How many gradations would I oblige myself to pass through, successively and slowly! How many delicate pleasures, unknown to the generality of men, would I, as it were, create to myself! Like the miser,

miser, I would incessantly contemplate my treasure, rejoice in the richness of it, be conscious that it constituted my highest felicity, place my whole scheme of happiness in the possession of it, in looking upon it as my own peculiar property, in being the absolute disposer of it,—and yet, strengthen myself in the resolution, not to lessen it by use! What transport to read in the eyes of a lovely woman, the dominion you have over her; to observe in all her actions relative to you, a still increasing tenderness; to perceive her voice assume a softer tone, whenever she speaks of, or to you; to view her blushes, even upon a compliment of course, and to triumph in her confusion upon any particular address!

Can there be a situation on earth, more flattering than that of a lover, conscious of a reciprocal flame? And what surer proof can he require, than instances like these? How charming to be expected with an

impatience, that her whole prudence cannot conceal; to be received with a welcome, which charms the more, by the endeavours she makes in part, to hide her transport! She has dressed herself in your taste, takes the very mien, the accent; the whole air of person, that is known to be most agreeable to you. Before, she used to adorn herself, to charm your sex in general. At present, her toilette is spread for you alone. For you these jewels, this ribbon, that bracelet, are put on. You are the sole object of her whole attire. You are become her second self. She loves you o'er again, in her own image!

Can there, even in love, be a more enchanting scene, than the faint reluctance of a yielding fair, supplicating you not to take advantage of her weakness,—reduced to owe her very virtue to you? In a word, can any thing be more bewitching, than a voice faltering with emotion, than those denials, for which she seems
almost

almost to reproach herself, and softens the rigour of by the most tender regards, even before they are complained of?

How can you suffer such enchantment to be dissolved? For my part, I cannot conceive it: and yet, when your hasty wishes shall be accomplished, these truly delicate pleasures diminish, in proportion to the facility of your victory. It remained in your power to prolong, to augment them, in affording yourself leisure to contemplate, and enjoy the refined, and superior sweetness of them.

But ye are never satisfied, 'till the possession is absolute, easy and uninterrupted; and yet, are afterwards surprized, to find your hearts affected with indifference, coldness and inconstancy. Have you not done every thing in your power, to cloy yourself with the desired object? How often have I told you, that love seldom dies of *hunger*, but frequently of *satiety*?

At some other time, I shall make you a confidant of my amour with *de Villars-ceaux*; and you may thence instruct yourself, after what manner one should conduct a passion, to make it lasting. You may then be able to judge whether I understand the human heart, and have a true taste for the refinements of pleasure. You will learn from my experience, that an œconomy of our passions, is perhaps the only rational *metaphysic* in love. You will, in fine, perceive from hence, how little consideration you have for your choicest interests, in your present impatient conduct toward the Countess.

But, to baffle all your schemes, I shall be frequent in my visits and counsels to her. Now do not put on a long face, and reproach me with playing a double part between ye; for in reality, according to my notions, I act equally for the advantage of both parties.

Farewel.

LETTER

L E T T E R XLII.

I Pity you, Marquis! Not I, truly. You never govern yourself by my counsels, and I am not sorry to see you suffer for it sometimes. You thought it was now high time to advance your familiarities with the Countess. The unreserved way she speaks of love, the easiness of her manners, the ready forgiveness of your many indiscretions, the frankness of her rallying the *Platonists*—all those I say, had led you into a presumption, that the severity of her morals might have been considerably abated, of late. But experience has shewn you the ignorance of your error; and all this *external* freedom, you will find to be only an alluring and political artifice.—But then—to abuse your simple hearted, plain dealing folk, after such a manner! 'Tis most ungenerous treatment, truly!

G. 5.

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and merits all the resentment that can possibly be shewn, upon so justifiable an occasion !

Now, shall I speak to you with my usual ingenuouſness ? You are fallen into a mistake, which is but too common with your sex. They rarely judge of us, but from outward appearances : they imagine, that every woman who does not hold her virtue constantly in armour, may become an easier conquest, than a prude : nor does even experience convince them of their error. By which means, they expose themselves often to severe repulses, which are therefore the more mortifying, as the least expected from that quarter.

Their *reprize* then, is to accuse us of jilting and caprice. Ye all cry out, with one voice, “ Why such equivocal proceedings ? If a woman is determined to remain inexorable, why should she cruelly amuse

amuse the hopes of her lover? Should there not be a conformity between your sentiments and actions? In fine, is it not ungenerous to suffer us to love you still, while you dispense with yourselves for a return? Is not this a disingenuous—nay, a dishonest conduct? Is not this to make a mock of love and sentiment?" &c.

No, gentlemen—it is only making a *mock* of your vanity.—You doubtless, bring a heavy charge against us; but after all, it is we in reality, who are the most equivocated with: for, do you mention *sensibility*, only to ennoble a passion which is the least *sensibility* of any?

Besides, is it not yourselves who lay us under the necessity of playing this game? If a woman has even the slightest knowledge of your sex, she must know that the strongest—the only tie over your affections, is hope: she ought surely then,

to supply constant food to your expectations. Should her deportment but once assume an invincible air—No more hope—No more lover.—What a forlorn state ! what an humble condition ! For let a woman's virtue be ever so severe, her heart is never thereby rendered less sensible to the desire of pleasing ; nor does her glory consist less in attracting your homage and adorations.—But, well knowing that those from whom they expect them, tender their devoirs from motives that mortify their pride ; and not being able to rectify this *vulgar defect*, they employ their whole art in taking a safe advantage of it ; and still preserve their admirers, by suffering those hopes to subsist, which they never mean to fulfil.

If they happen to have address, they succeed in their scheme ; and if a woman has the least knowledge of her true interests, she will revolve to herself what the Countess

Countess said to me, in our last conversation together. "I know well what sort of value to set upon the *I love you* of men, and thoroughly comprehend the full scope of their protestations. It is therefore my own fault, if I suffer myself to be imposed upon by them. And indeed, after one has comprehended their design, our pride alone, one should fancy, might be sufficient to disconcert their views. Resentment, when their behaviour provokes it, is not the best shield we can take up against them. Whoever is reduced to call in foreign aid, and summon anger to their assistance, betrays the poverty of their own resources. A fine irony, a smart raillery, or a mortifying slight, are more effectual discouragements. Let there be no quarrels, and there will be no occasion for reconciliations; which always gain some ground. What advantages will not such conduct deprive them of!

"Prudes,

“ Prudes, indeed, take quite another method. Make but the least attack upon them, and they are up in arms, at once; as if the credit of their chastity was to rise, in proportion to the height of their resentment. But, what is the effect of so much starchness? *Men of the world* are apt to say, I might not have sustained this repulse, had I not ill-timed my attack. It is my indiscretion, and not my assurance, that is rebuked. At another conjuncture, the crime of to-day, might perhaps be the merit of to-morrow. Her present resentment, is a hint, to watch a more *critical minute*, when I may probably obtain more indulgence, and disarm her pride. I must appease her wrath, and the surest way of making her forget this offence, is, in the instant of forgiveness, to offend again. This I say may be their reasoning with these *outrageously virtuous*; but in my manner of treating such impertinence, they

they can never make use of this method of argument.^a

“ The Marquis, for example, has sometimes betrayed his *respectful* intentions, by his eyes. I used but one method, upon these occasions ;—I have seemed to take no notice of it, and insensibly gave a turn to the conversation, which drew his attention upon other objects. This address served me extremely well, ’till the last time we were together ; and then, indeed, there was no farther dissembling with him. He would have *honoured* me with some freedoms : which, however, I quickly put a

^a A friend of mine, reading this passage, resembled prudes to dwarfs in armour, who if the fight was continued for any time, are apt to sink under the weight of their own accoutrements. And added, that the difference between these *virtuoso’s*, and such as the Countess, might be compared to charioteers, who preserve their seat, by sitting free and easy in it. These who fix themselves stiff, are liable to be thrown out by a jolt.

stop

stop to, but without anger. I thought it better to defend myself by reason, than by passion. I appeared rather mortified, than provoked; and I am certain, that my concern affected him more, than the highest resentment could have done. He retired on the instant with a desponding air.—But now, to see what stuff the heart is made of! In the first moments I feared I had lost him for ever—I almost repented me of my cruelty—I thought I had carried my politicks too far. But a little reflection re-assured me again. Has coyness ever created inconstancy?”

In short, Marquis, we talked upon this subject, 'till we were both of us out of breath.—And, if I can answer for woman, I think your Countess stands upon *firm ground*. You may exclaim aloud against her unkindness; call her capricious and unjust. But no pleasures of love for her, that are to be purchased at the expence

pence of her pride. This is her absolute resolve ; and she has, believe me, strength sufficient to support it.

The loss of your heart would, I really think, be a misfortune she might feel with regret, perhaps her whole life. But, on the other hand, the conditions you impose on the preserving it, are a great deal too severe. She would compound this business with you. She hopes to fix your *regards*, without remitting *those* she owes herself. This is a project, worthy of her spirit ; and I hope it may succeed better with her, than the one she formed before, to guard her heart from love. We must attend the event.

Shall we meet you to-morrow, on our intended visit to the president's widow ? If you have any thing to say to us, you may take this opportunity of making your peace.

Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XLIII.

I Never expected it Marquiss.—But I find that my good will to serve you, is to be paid with reproaches only; and I am, it seems, to take share with the Countess, of that ill humour her coyness has thrown you into. Do you know now, that tho' what you say had had any foundation, nothing could have mortified me more, than the ironical tone with which you pretend to compliment me upon my principles of philosophy.

But your making me responsible, for your success in this amour, diverts me extremely. Have you taken it into your head that my design in these letters, was to give you lectures on seduction? Do you make no difference between teaching you how to please, and instructing you how to *delude*? 'Tis true I explained to
you

you the physical cause of love, both male and female; but did I ever say, that women were therefore, the more easily won; Did I ever advise you to attack them by the senses; or suppose them to be void of delicacy or sentiment? I appeal to my letters—You say you have them all—I defy you to produce a single paragraph, to this purpose.

While your inexperience and bashfulness suffered you to appear in an awkward light before women, I remarked to you the disadvantages this might subject you to, in your progress thro' life. I then advised you to assume a little more spirit and confidence, in order to inspire you by degrees, with that easy and liberal address which becomes a gentleman, in a polite commerce with women. But, when I found that you carried your pretensions too far, and were likely to affect the honour of the Countess, I confess honestly, that

that I took part against you. It was very proper I should do so: I was then, become her friend.

You may see then, how unjust your charges are, against me; and I really think, that your opinion of her, is as much so. You speak of her, as one of an equivocal character; as a woman who is neither determined for nor against gallantry; and then peremptorily conclude, that she is only a coquette, of an higher class than ordinary.

What a judgment have you framed? But one must make allowance for the present perturbations of your mind. A dispassionate, unprejudiced person, might have perceived the Countess to be a mistress, full as chaste as tender;—a woman not professing the *shew*, but possessing the *substance* of virtue. Finally, an amiable fair, whom honour and prudence have inspired with

with the most proper conduct to conciliate her love for you, and her duty to herself, together.

The difficulty of blending these repugnances into one system, is not inconsiderable; and this is the source of that inequality of behaviour which perplexes you in her.—Imagine to yourself, the struggles she must sustain, the varying modes of her defence, and the inconsistencies, that must unavoidably appear in her actions, who would endeavour to preserve a lover, whom too continued a resistance might deprive her of.

There is no keeping a steady conduct with you men.—You are so very impatient, that you fly off frequently, upon the slightest opposition. You do honour to our virtue, but abandon us at the same time. And what a disgrace is this! How many women have sacrificed themselves,
to

to prevent such a mortification! But since in neither case, one is sure of preserving the lover, we ought certainly to prefer that method, which may at least intitle us to his affections and esteem.

This is *our* opinion—For the Countess and I have discussed, and agreed this point between us. Shew then more equity, Marquis.—Pity, rather than condemn her. If her character had been more remiss, you would perhaps, have liked it better.—But would you do so long? Not you, truly.—Adieu.—We reckon upon your company this evening, at Madame de la Fayette's, and hope to meet you there, in a more rational humour.

To-morrow, the Abbé de Gedeine is to be presented to me. I am to have a most brilliant assembly. Will you come? But I know how insipid it must be to you, as the Countess will not be with me.—You
would

would say of my appartments, what *Mal-herbe* has of the gardens of the *Louvre* :

In vain you boast your charms, your
beauties rare !

I see them not—*Calista* is not there.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

A Calm has at length succeeded to your storm, Marquis; and I perceive from your letter, that you are at present, better pleased with the Countess, even than you are with yourself. What an additional force does reason obtain, in passing thro' ivory teeth, and ruby lips!

Observe the different effects of the different conduct of the two cousins. The coyness of the one has augmented your esteem, and confirmed your love: while the kindness of the other has rendered the Chevalier faithless. Such is the nature of man! and ingratitude the reward of our favours!

This misfortune however, may possibly be prevented—And I shall upon this occasion, communicate to you part of
a let-

a letter, I have lately received from Monsieur *de St. Evremond*.—You know the constant correspondence we have always held together.

The young Count de - - - some time ago married Mademoiselle de - - -, of whom he had been most desperately enamoured. Soon after, he lamented to me that marriage and possession should too generally weaken, nay frequently extinguish, the fondest, the most tender passion. We disserted a good deal upon so interesting a subject; and as I happened to write, the same day, to *St. Evremond*, I proposed the *thesis* to him; and I send you the answer I received, in his own manuscript.

*Monsieur de St. EVREMOND to
Mademoiselle de L'ENCLOS.*

“ My sentiments agree perfectly with yours, madam. It is not always, as it

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is

is commonly imagined, that either matrimony or enjoyment, of themselves, diminish or destroy this passion. The little discretion with which we husband our affections; too absolute, too easy, too uninterrupted a possession; these are the real sources of those *weanings* and disgusts, which arise so frequently in love.

“When we surrender ourselves up without reserve, to all the excesses of a passion, these extraordinary transports are apt suddenly to subside, to leave a cloyed satiety upon the mind, and suffer the heart to become sensible of a listless vacancy of sentiment, and chilliness of affection. In vain do we seek, out of ourselves, the causes of that calm which succeeds our strongest emotions. Nor do we see that a more equal and lasting pleasure had been the consequence of a little moderation.

“Examine closely, into the movements of your mind, when you wish for any thing,

thing, and you will find, that your desires arise solely, from a fondness for variety. The love of change is the very *diastolé* of the heart.^b Satisfy our curiosity, and our wishes faint away. Whoever, then, would fix on a husband, or a lover, should still leave them something to desire: each day should promise something new or rare, for the morrow. Diversify his pleasures; exhibit in the same object, the quickening spirit of variety, and I will answer for his fidelity and constancy.

“ I acknowledge indeed, that marriage, or what is stiled your *defeat*, is in common life, the sepulchre of love: But then, it is less to the lover, than to the fair one who complains of this mortality, that the defeat is to be imputed. She objects to the corruption of the heart, what is but

^b Its dilatation, or expansion; which gives a free circulation of the blood thro’ the whole animal economy.

the natural consequence of her mal-address, and indiscreet œconomy. She has expended at once, what would have maintained a passion for life : She has reserved nothing new to amuse the expectations, the curiosity of her lover. Like a fixed statue, she excites no desires ; and her whole rôle he has already by heart.

“ But with a woman, *such as I have at present in contemplation*, it is the dawn of a fair summer's day : not the hasty snatch of transient joy, but a stated course of permanent pleasures ; of those disclosures of the heart ; those mutual confidences, which charm the soul ; those ingenuous confessions, which escape your lips ; those transports, which are excited in our breasts, by the consciousness of constituting the whole happiness, and meriting the entire affections of the person beloved.

“ This day, in a word, is an æra, when
a man

a man of refined sentiment, will begin to find out inexhaustible treasures, which 'till then had been modestly concealed from him. The freedom a woman acquires upon such occasions, suffers her to display that wit, that sense, and those talents, which restraint and reserve had kept him a stranger to before. Her soul begins now to take a *flight*, but soaring still under command of the *lure*.^c Thus time, so far from inducing indifference, or disgust, but rather multiplies reasons for increasing love.

“ But then we must still suppose, that this same woman shall have government enough over her passions, to keep her affections ever under command.—For to preserve a lover, it is not enough—or rather it is too much—to love him to excess. She must know how to parcel out her fond-

^c A metaphor borrowed from falconry.

ness, by *retail*—not heap it upon him by *wholesale*. And for this very purpose, modesty is, perhaps, the most ingenious device, that could possibly have ever been imagined, by the wit and delicacy of mankind.^d

“ But, to deliver herself up so entirely to her passion, to annihilate herself, as it were, in the presence of her lover, is the part of a meer novice in the science. This is not *to love*—’tis *to languish*—and to suffer the passion also, soon to do so too.

“ I would have a woman conduct herself with better oeconomy, and address.

^d This is one, among the many passages, interspersed throughout these writings, which afford admirable hints to our sex. Modesty is certainly the surest charm, to win or wear a lover; *be, be delicate, or be be not*. What has been said of honesty, may be affirmed of this quality, also; that it is the *best policy*; even supposing virtue, character, and decency, out of the question.

The

The greatness of her fondness, does by no means justify her. The heart is a fiery courser, whose mettle should be restrained. If you manage not his forces with horsemanship, his spirit will but the sooner jade him. The same lukewarmness that you perceive in the lover, after these extraordinary transports, you will also be sensible of in yourself; and you will, both of you, in a short time, find yourselves equally inclined to quit the irrecoverable game. In fine, it requires more genius to love, and to increase and prolong the happiness of loving, than is too generally imagined.

“Till the moment of the fatal *Yes*, on whatever terms granted, a woman has but little need of artifice, to preserve her lover. Curiosity excites, desire impels, and hope sustains. But when once success has crowned the adventure, she is called upon to use as much pains to preserve her lover, as it cost him to win her. It requires that

the desire of fixing him should inspirit her policies; for the heart is like an open town, easier to take than keep.

“Beauty is sufficient to win our love; but to insure our constancy, something more is necessary. There must be sense, address, cleverness, and a certain *quickness of spirit*. But unhappily, when they have once ceded the question, they become too tender, they even prevent our wishes. It would be better, for our mutual advantage, were they less coy before, and more reserved after.—I must repeat it: there is no way to postpone disgust, but by leaving the heart at leisure to form its wishes.

“I hear them continually complaining, that our indifference is generally the consequence of their compliances; eternally reproaching us with the times, when whole summer suns rolled unperceived away, in their company. Fruitless chiding! 'Tis
upon

upon themselves, not on us, they should call, to restore that happy and regretted æra. Let them forget the favours they have already granted, and they will not labour to exceed them. Let them suffer us to forget them, and we shall exact the less. Let them rouse our affections by new difficulties; let our sollicitudes revive—in a word, suffer our doubts still to require fresh proofs of a passion, the certainty of which so much abates the value. Thenceforward, they will have less to complain of in us, and more to be satisfied with in themselves.

“I tell it to you frankly,—the scenes would be quite shifted, if women would constantly bear in mind, that their *rôle* was always to receive petitions—ours, to supplicate and earn new bounties. That made to *grant*, they ought never to *give*. Reserved even in the excess of passion, they should not yield themselves up to it, with-

out controul. Leave the lover always something farther to desire, and he will be obsequious to obtain it. Full compliances render the most bewitching charms of none effect, and soon disgust the very person who exacts them. This is not a speculative *problem*, but a truth of confirmed experience.

- “ Possession places all women on a level. The homely and the fair, after their conquest, have no difference between them, except the art of preserving still our hearts. But what is commonly the case? A woman thinks she has nothing farther to do, than to be submissive, fond, mild, even-tempered, and faithful. So far indeed, she judges right, that these qualities should be the foundation of her character; they will secure our esteem: but valuable as they are, if not seasoned with a spice of humour and caprice, they will suffer the flame to languish, *for want of air*, and a certain

certain weariness and languor to remain : mortal poisons to the best constituted hearts.

“ Do you know, in fine, the reason why lovers are so soon tired of prosperity ? and why women please so little, after having pleased so much ? ’Tis because both parties have, each of them, an opinion equally false. One imagines that there is nothing more to gain ; and the other, that there is nothing more to give. Upon which notion, the one slackens his pursuit, and the other neglects to exert herself ; or at best, confines her exertion within the province of substantial merit. They substitute reason and esteem for passion. Then farewell the quickening salt of love : Adieu the wholesome gales of jealous altercation, which purge the stagnant lake of subsided affection.

“ But, when I say that the *dead calm*
H 6 of

of a fond commerce, should be sometimes *ruffled by breezes*, you will not, I hope, imagine that I would have two lovers spend their lives in squabbles together. I would have their piques, their expostulations, to arise from the delicacies of love, alone: that the fair one should never, from pusillanimous acquiescence, remit those deferences and regards, which she has both a natural, and a purchased right to: that from too tender a sensibility, she would not make of love, a source of inquietudes, to embitter all her days: that by too scrupulous a conduct she would not leave the lover in too great security, that he has nothing to apprehend, from that quarter: in fine, that she should never, from too easy and even a disposition, have the weakness to pardon, or pass by, every deficiency of respect and attention, which too secure lovers are apt to be careless about. Experience often proves, that women lose the hearts of their husbands, or lovers,
by

by an excess of indulgence and remissness. How weak a conduct! They make a merit of sacrificing every thing to them; they spoil, and render them ungrateful. Too much bounty turns against themselves at last; for by use, they begin to look upon that as their right, which was at first accorded them only as a favour.

“Have you not known women, even among the most despicable of their sex, to govern with a rod of iron, treat like vassals those unfortunate persons who happened to fall under their power, rendering them contemptible to the eyes of the world, by the usurped and arbitrary sway they bear over them. And yet, are not these the wives and mistresses, who generally the longest maintain their empire! I know that a woman of sense, breeding or moral, will never frame her conduct, upon such unseemly examples as these. So militant an air is repugnant to the softness of
feminine

feminine manners, and contrary to that propriety and decency which make the charm, even of those things which lead them aside from virtue. But, midway between the termagant and milkop, may perhaps be found the class of women the fittest to govern us, both for the continuance of our happiness, and their own. We are a sort of slaves, that too much lenity renders insolent ; and we frequently require to be treated like those in America—with discipline and chains. We have in our minds a certain innate notion of justice, which informs us that the hand that rules us, may fall heavy upon us sometimes, with reason ; and we therefore acquiesce without a murmur.

“ To conclude—In every thing that falls within the province of love, women ought to be our absolute sovereigns.—’Tis from their hands alone, we are to receive

ceive our happiness and pleasures. And they will infallibly supply our lives with both, when they shall have learned to manage our affections with judgment, to moderate their own with discretion, and to maintain their sway, without *exposing*, or abusing it.

ST. EVREMOND."

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

IN two words I will answer you, Marquis. In order to profit of the counsels of St Evremond, a woman must have first excited a strong passion in her lover, and have conceived but a slight one in herself. To the rest, we shall discuss those points at a more leisure interval. I proceed now, to your own concerns.

The sacrifice, that the Countess has required from you, deserved well the price you have set upon it. To quit a woman for her, who by her whole behaviour toward you, has declared herself willing to accept you, upon your own terms.—To renounce her publicly, in the very presence of her rival; and with so little saving to the pride of the forsaken fair, was really an effort which merited the highest recompence. She could never have framed a
better

better pretence for making you a present of her picture.

But to fix upon so signal an occasion, as the day the Marchioness received her first visits; to chuse a time when the *low cit* had the vanity and presumption to put on all her attractions, and dispute the prize with a *woman of quality*; to speak to her only *en passant*; to appear wholly wrapt up in the pleasure of seeing her rival, to entertain her apart, and to form all her parties—This is an outrage, that can never be forgiven; and the *financiere*, depend upon it, will never be at peace within herself, until she has taken ample vengeance, for so mortifying an affront.

Now, to the second article of your letter. You interrogate me whether *the last favour*, or rather, *the last fault*, be a convincing argument of a woman's love, Ay — or No?

Yes

Yes—if you happen to be her first passion; and that she has either delicacy or virtue. But even in this case, the proof is neither more certain, nor more flattering, than the many lesser tokens of her fondness, she must have suffered to escape her, before. Every thing, that is said or done by a woman who truly loves, even the most insignificant to common apprehension, are full as sure marks of passion, as those which you make such a rout about.

I may also add, that if even this woman should happen to be of *a certain complexion*, the last favour may be rather a lesser proof of her passion, than many other sacrifices or condescensions, which perhaps might have been deemed of too small moment to be made account of. For in that instance, she might have considered herself, more than you: She may have had so much interest in complying, as to leave you nothing to be vain of,

of, in persuading. Any other in your place, might have the same success.

I knew a woman once, who had been overcome, two or three times, by persons whom she had no particular liking to, while the one she really loved, had sighed and sued in vain. It may therefore happen, that the last favour shall not prove any thing in the *thesis* you propose. On the contrary, a man may obtain it sometimes, from a woman's indifference toward him. We never respect ourselves so highly, as before those we esteem; and it must therefore, require a stronger degree of passion, to hurry a woman of any sentiment, into a breach of decorum, before one whose good opinion she sets account by. Your boasted triumphs then, may frequently arise from motives, which far from satisfying your pride, might mortify your vanity, to the last degree, were they but ingenuously confessed.

One

One perceives, for example, a lover slacken in his addresses, on resistance. One fears his elopement, to throw himself at the feet of some kinder fair. Care for him or not, one cares not to lose him. It is always humiliating to see one's self forsaken. One yields, meerly for want of knowing any other method of staying him. The fault should not lie at her door: If he quits her after, the blame be his. For as women attach themselves more strongly, by the very favours they bestow, they are led into a vain notion, that surely gratitude should form a closer tye, on the receipt of them. Silly novices!

Others comply from various motives; curiosity determines one; she would know what love is. Another, on defect of the charms of beauty, would attract by those of pleasure. A third, has conceived an ambition to attach a man whose devoirs may flatter her vanity; and sacrifices every thing

thing to this principle. Others may yield thro' compassion, opportunity, importunity, resentment to a faithless lover, &c.—But enough.—In short, the heart is so capricious, and the reasons which determine it so whimsical and various, that it is impossible to enumerate all the springs that govern its motions. But, if we are apt to mistake the means of fixing ye, ye are also as often deceived with regard to the proofs of our passion. Was there any delicacy among your sex, they would perceive tokens of our fondness in many things, more than our most signal favours.

Tell me Marquis, what have I done to Monsieur *de Coulanges*? He has not come near me, this month past. Tho' in my own defence, I must say, that I always received him with the highest politeness. He is one of the most agreeable men I know. I shall be angry, if you do not bring him
to

to see me, on my return from *Versailles*. I long to hear him sing the last ode he has composed; they say it is extremely fine.

Adieu.

LETTER XLVI.

YOU are extremely polite Marquis, in your expressions upon my absence. If I have not written to you since my coming to the country, it was, because I thought I had left you in a most prosperous situation; and this consideration rendered me quite easy about you. Besides, I thought that love should be indulged in all its rights, as its empire is generally so short. And as friendship is a quite different province, I waited patiently, 'till some interval of pleasure might afford you leisure, to attend to my correspondence.

Do you know how I was employed all the while? I amused myself with combining

ning the events which must naturally arise, from the situation of affairs in which I left your little society. I knew the arts of the Countess, against her rival, and concluded that an open rupture must be the consequence of them. I foresaw that the Marchioness would take part, rather with the latter; for the *financiere* is not quite so handsome as the former; which must have been a decisive argument, for declaring in her favour, as this alliance leaves her in less danger of an *eclipse*. I knew that all this would terminate in a squabble, among the women; but throughout this revolution, I am glad to find, that your good fortune still maintains its ground.

Every day will supply you with new reasons, for loving and esteeming your charming Countess. A woman of such real merit, and so engaging a figure, must win upon you, in proportion to your acquaintance with her. Let nothing weaken
your

your attachment to her. You have, 'tis true, obtained a confession of her passion toward you. Is she the less estimable, upon that account? Ought it not rather, to augment the value of a prize, every degree of certainty you acquire, of your being the sole possessor? Nay, should she even yield you the *last proof*, which was the subject of a late letter, ought this to lessen your esteem?

You'll excuse my freedom; but I cannot help saying, that the *happy*, of your sex, too often betray a most unmanly meanness of sentiment, breeding and moral, in their conduct, toward the *unhappy*, of ours. Their narrow souls make no distinction, between a *weakness*, and a *vice*; and punish for *misfortunes*, as for *crimes*. What height of depravation, to add insult to perfidy? Can they not become inconstant, without being unjust, also? Were it not enough, that *apathy* succeed to *passion*,

lion, but must *disgust* pursue desire? Even were she *criminal*, is it the receiver, the accomplice, that should inflict the penalty? A *banditti* would behave with more justice, with more honour. They ne'er betray—they ne'er *impeach*—except to save a life.

Preserve, then, your sentiments for the Countess, intire, to the end; nor ever, let your event be what it may, suffer a false opinion to interrupt the progress, which her merits must naturally make, both in your affections and esteem. It is not their *defeat*, in itself, which ought to render women despicable. The manner in which they defend, surrender, and conduct themselves after, should be the sole rule of those judgments, the world has a right to form, either of *compassion*, or *contempt*.

Madame de la Fayette, you say, seems to think, that my last letter was on too

free a subject. You see what censures your indiscretion has laid me under. But, she did not consider, that I was no more culpable in that particular, than a lecturer in anatomy. I analyze the *moral*, as he dissects the *natural* man. Would you not think him too scrupulous, to omit in his course, those parts of his subject, which might afford to idle minds, occasions of loose reflection? It is not the nature of things, that constitutes indecency; neither the words, nor even the ideas. 'Tis the intention, of those who speak, or the depravity, of them who hear. Madame de la Fayette is the person in the world, whom I should have least suspected, for such a criticism. I shall wait upon the Countess to-morrow, and convince her of *la Fayette's* error.

Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XLVII.

HOW can you imagine, Marquis, that I should be surprized, at the new lures the *financiere* has thrown out before you? Do you think I am a stranger to women? I never doubted for a moment, that she would use every artifice of coquetry, to snatch you from the Countess. She may, perhaps, have conceived some little inclination toward you, herself; but moderate your vanity upon that occasion; for be assured, that her most active motive is, the transport of revenge. Her pride is interested to mortify her rival, for having already obtained the preference. Women never forgive such an affront as this. And if he who is the subject of the quarrel, be not the principal object of their pique, they always make use of him, for the purposes of their resentment.

I 2

You

106 MADAME DE L'ENVELOPS TO

You have met with in the *financiere*, all you required in the Countess, to confirm your attachment to her. She tenders you spontaneously, the reward of those services you proffer, and which by way of further compromise, she may, perhaps, remit you. And I much fear, you are indelicate enough, to accept of such mean terms. For, to your shame be it spoken, the motto of all men's hearts is, *To be most complying*.

But, should you not blush, to deserve the least reproach from the Countess? What sort of person do you seem to prefer before her? A woman, without delicacy or love; moved by no attractions, but those of pleasure; more vain than sensible; more voluptuous than tender; and more amorous than fond: who values nothing in you but your youth—and the qualities which attend it.

You

You are quite sensible of the whole worth of her rival; you acknowledge the wrongs you do her; you confess yourself to be a monster of ingratitude, and yet you cannot exert resolution enough to merit her forgiveness. In truth, Marquis, I am at a loss to account for you, and begin to agree with Madame de Sevigné, who says, that her son knows his duty, and can reason upon it well; but his passions hurry him away, so that, *it is not his head that is mad, but his heart.*

However, I agree with you, that when it would be idle here to repeat to me what I formerly advanced, about the cavalier manner in which the affair of love was to be treated. At that time, I rather amused myself with some light reflections, than pretended to give you advice in form. Besides, the question then, regarded only a slight, a temporary attachment, or con-

* In her letters to Madame de Grignan, her daughter.

mon mistress; but your present situation is of quite a different nature. I am certain, that there is not, in the whole circuit of *Paris*, any woman, who can be brought even within the degrees of comparison, with that amiable person you are now quitting, so foolishly. And for what reason, I pray you? Because, forsooth, her resistance mortifies your vanity. Kind, or unkind, we equally lose ye! What bonds remain there, to withhold such fugitives?

However, I agree with you, that when a passion is in *embers*, it is no easy matter to receive the flame. *One has it no more in their power, to continue love, than they had to resist it.* I confess the truth of such maxims, but confess them with regret, when I consider, that in consequence of them, you are quitting the *jewel* for the *paste*; that you renounce a solid happiness, and lasting pleasures, for transient joys, and capricious appetites.

But

But, I foresee that all my reasonings will not reclaim you. I begin even to apprehend, that you are grown weary of my moral; and to speak the truth, I think it almost ridiculous to preach up constancy to you, after it has appeared your love has ceased, and that—*your heart is mad*. I resign you, therefore, to your evil genius; though I may, perhaps, still have good-nature, or curiosity enough, to accompany you in your future wanderings. What avails it to afflict one's self? Should I assume the air of a pedagogue? — Not I truly—We should neither of us gain any thing by the bargain. I should only tire myself, without reforming you.

So, fare you well.

LETTER XLVIII.

I Must confess, Marquis, that your late behaviour toward the Countess, had put me a good deal out of humour with you; and I was very near breaking off all commerce between us, upon considering what a good-for-nothing sort of fellow you are. But the easiness with which I have relented, at your instances, makes me imagine, that my friendship for you have some mixture of weakness in it.

What you say is true enough, that to continue one's attachment to a person, only while they listen to our counsels, is but being half a friend. The more dangerous your situation is, the less certainly, I should abandon you. But, one is not always master of their first movements. Whatever efforts I made, to philosophize away your guilt, were borne down, by the superior interests

interests I had taken in the misfortunes of my fair ally. And who could avoid thinking you highly criminal, when you had given so charming a woman cause of complaint against you? But at present, since I find her situation beginning to grow easier, every day, I am almost sorry for the coolness of my last letter.

I shall henceforth content myself in compassionating her, without ever urging you any farther, upon this subject; so let us carry on our former intercourse, with the same careless freedom as before. You need apprehend no more lectures from me; for I perceive they would, after this, be both useless, and out of season.

I wish you health. Adieu.

LETTER XLIX.

YOU never imagined, Marquis, that it might be sometimes more difficult to disengage one's self from a mistress, than to gain one. However, you have experience of it in your own case, at present. Your disgust at the *financière*, surprises me only in this, that it did not happen sooner. Can it be possible, that acquainted as you are with her character, you can be so far imposed upon by her, as to mistake the despair she affects at your indifference, for the symptom of a real passion? That you should still remain the dupe of her intrigue, not only raises my wonder, but compassion too. Yet, is it not your own vanity that helps to carry on the illusion? And in truth, it is one of a very peculiar nature, which can be able to flatter you with the love of such a woman. But men are really so self-sufficient, that they would be puffed

fed up with the fondness of the most abandoned courtesan.

But, prithee undeceive yourself. A woman that you quit, who is of the character of your amorous fair, has, be assured, no manner of concern in her misfortune, except for her own single interest. She would endeavour, by her emotions and her tears, to persuade you, that your merit and accomplishments are the sole causes of her regret; that the failure of your affections is the only loss she has to lament; and that she knows no person upon earth, who can be capable of repairing her damage.

But, all these prettexts are truly disingenuous. It is not an afflicted mistress, who implores you. 'Tis a vain woman, mortified at having her own inconstancy anticipated; piqued at the weak prevalence of her charms, distracted how to supply

your loss, on the sudden: proud to assume an air of sensibility, and to appear deserving of a better fate. In a word, she only seems to justify that maxim of Monsieur de la Rochefautault, *that women lament not their lovers for forsaking them, so much as to be thought more worthy of being beloved.*

It is quite ridiculous for the *financiere* to make an harangue on *sensibility*; and indeed she must have a very slight opinion of you, to think of imposing it on you. But, let us *join issue* on this point. The *Chevalier* is at present, disengaged. Get him to replace you with her; and I dare answer for it, that in a letter or two, at the farthest, you will let me have the satisfaction to hear, that her despair has been perfectly consoled.

A woman, at her time of life, begins to apprehend lest she might not be able to make herself amends for the loss of a lover,

lover, and may be obliged to undervalue her charms, by being reduced to accept the first offer. Her concern may perhaps be real; but you may more probably mistake the sources of it. Break then, her bonds afunder, without remorse. In a punctilio of constancy or delicacy for such an object, you must certainly appear as ridiculous, as you were truly criminal in your deficiency in both these respects upon a late occasion.

Do you remember, Marquis, what Monsieur de Constances said to us one day, upon a general topic, that *constancy was a virtue in persons of ordinary merit only*. Have they had the fortune to win the favour of some capricious fair, the consciousness of their own high worth, fixes their attachments, and intimidates from adventure; in despair of succeeding in such another *crisis*. Sufficiently happy in having taken a heart by surprize, they fear to lose a sub-
stance,

stance, by grasping at a *shadow*. And as the smallest interval of consideration, might afford the mistress leisure to reflect upon the slight value of the lover, what is their policy? They make a *virtue of necessity*; they found a superstition upon love; and employ reason to preserve a heart, which they owe merely to caprice, to accident, or surprize.

Prithee do not rank yourself in so insignificant a class. Hearts are the *coin* of gallantry: amiable persons the *commodities* of this commerce: *circulation* is the life of trade, and equally benefits the community. A constant person, then, is as blameable as a miser, who arrests the medium of traffic, and hoards up a treasure useless in itself, unless set free for the emolument of others.

Besides, what satisfaction is there in a mistress, to whom one is held attached,
by

by reason only? How languid the pleasure! What violence sustained, in feigning to love, where passion has surceased! It rarely happens, that fondness becomes extinct on both sides, at the same time; and then, what a misfortune is constancy! It may be compared to the cruelty of that ancient tyrant, who chained the living and the dead together. What difference is there, between the inflictions?

Root out a prejudice then, so injurious to society. Follow my advice — tender your addresses to the President's widow you mentioned to me lately; she may perhaps lie a little heavy on hands now and then; but at least, she will not degrade your passion. If, as you say, she be as deficient in sense, as she abounds in beauty, her empire will not continue long; you will be then the sooner restored to liberty again; and I doubt not but another, or many other galantries may succeed. Nay, perhaps

perhaps you may not wait the flowery of
 succession ; for I perceive, from the liber-
 tinism of your letter, that you are become
 quite a *man of mode*. The new system you
 have adopted, is perfectly in that charac-
 ter, and is of admirable oeconomy. Ne-
 ver to finish one amour, till you have com-
 menced another ; and not to withdraw
 yourself from a first engagement, but in
 proportion to your progress in a second.—
 Can any thing be better contrived ? But,
 as all these sage precautions may leave one
 unluckily unprovided ; as some event be-
 yond the reach of human foresight, may
 possibly disconcert your politics, or rather
 confound your devices—to establish it, as a
 principle, to part always on friendly terms
 with your former mistresses, in order to re-
 serve somewhat to amuse your *vexations*—
 this, I must confess, Marquis, shews you
 to be a perfect *Martinet* in galantry. In
 short, it must be impossible to make any
 improve-

improvement upon the wisdom of such a plan. Adieu.

I do not know how I have the courage to write you such long and silly letters. I find so much pleasure in corresponding with you, that it would alarm me, if I did not know my heart well. But, I recollect that it is at present disengaged; and I must therefore keep on my guard, for some time, as I find you have fallen into a humour lately, of saying tender things to me; and I don't know how soon I may take it into my head to believe you.

Once more, Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER L.

YOU may make a jest of it, if you please; but I do affirm it for a truth, that you are not, in reality, smitten with the fair *Presidente*. Believe me, Marquis, that I see farther into your heart than you do yourself. I have known a number of well-meaning people, with all the sincerity in the world, imagine like you, that they were mightily in love; while, in fact, they were not in the least actuated by any one symptom of that passion.

It is of the disorders of the heart, as it is of those of the body; some are real, and others imaginary. Every thing that attaches you to a woman, is not always love. The habit of being together, the facility of seeing each other, the flying from one's self, the amusements of galantry,

try, the desire of pleasing, the hope of success ; in a word, a thousand other motives, which resemble an elephant as much as a passion, are what men, more frequently than is imagined, mistake for love : and women also, assist to confirm you in this error. Flattered at the homage they receive, while it feeds their vanity, they rarely examine into the philosophy of the matter. And are they not in the right of it ? What a deal of pleasure would they lose !

To the motives I have been mentioning, you may add another, which is as likely as any to deceive you with regard to the nature of your affections. The *Presidente* is certainly as pretty a woman as any in *Paris* ; just entered into her *weeds* ; and has lately refused the addresses of a man of high merit and accomplishments. Nothing could surely flatter your vanity more, than such a conquest ; which might procure

cure you at once that *empty* fame, you men are generally so puffed up with. This, friend Marquis, is what you call love; and it may be a difficult matter to undeceive you: for when sanguine minds have once conceived an *imaginary* disorder, the most foreign symptoms are apt to be referred to the *real* one.

It may be entertaining enough, in a short time, to hear with what dignity you will speak of your supposed sentiments; how seriously you will think they have a right to challenge a grateful return. And what may be pleasanter still, would be the deferences that she herself might imagine to be their due. But, the event may clear up your understanding, and you will then be the first to laugh at that air of importance you had given to so insignificant an affair.

Shall I tell you the whole of my opinion about you? I am persuaded that you will
never

never be in love again. You will be sensible for the future, of but wandering likings, slight attachments, or capricious engagements. Its arrows will but slightly glance o'er your *coat of mail*. You will no more, indeed, sustain its pains ; but can you e'er again experience its pleasures ? Can you ever expect to find, in such *extempore* passions as you have thrown yourself away upon, any of those delicate and delicious moments, which formerly framed your highest bliss ! I do not mean to flatter you ; but I think I owe you the justice to say, that your heart is formed for refined pleasures. It is not you therefore, upon whom I charge the unhappy dissipation of your present life ; it is upon the silly young men you associate with, with whom the *use* of pleasure, is its *abuse* ; and example leads you. But this giddiness of the senses, will sooner or later, cure itself, and you will be then sensible

ble—at least, I wish it sincerely—that you have been mistaken in two instances, with regard to the situation of your heart. You think it is enamoured of the *Presidente*; you will then perceive your error. You think that it has ceased all sentiment for the Countess. But remember what I have told you. A time may come, when we shall talk upon this subject, with more pleasure and leisure. Let us proceed now to the rest of your letter.

I believe you will hardly deny, Marquis, but you were at a loss how to employ your time this morning, when you amused yourself in reading over all my letters; and I fancy that you were not a little out of humour also, by your *playing the critic* upon them as you have done. Some brilliant party, some flattering assignation, must certainly have failed you just then. But I do not mean to elude the difficulty you propose. I appear, you say,
to

to contradict myself often. Should I acknowledge this to be true, might I not, at the same time, make the apology that *la Bruyere* did to some cavils of the same kind? *It is not I that contradict myself, but the heart upon which I reason.*

But do you conclude from hence, that all I have said on this subject is false? I can hardly think you so ignorant. However, it is not unlikely, that being perplexed by the various situations I have found you in, I might have appeared sometimes to destroy those maxims I had before advanced, upon different occasions. May it not be probable, that upon seeing you in danger of falling into error, I might have pressed too far those truths, which weakly urged might be thought too insufficient to have reclaimed you? How do I know, in fine, but that being interested in the happiness of a friend, my warmth to serve her may have somewhat warped my

my sincerity? But one would fancy that I was as idle as you, to answer seriously to the cavils of your letter. Might I not have perceived at first sight, that there was more pique than criticism in it? But this is the last time you shall ever abuse my good-nature. Adieu.——I am going to console myself for your ingratitude with the conversation of Monsieur de ———. A very different person from you, I assure you.

What pity 'tis, that you are not a woman! I should have so much pleasure in disputing with you about our new-fashioned head-dresses. I never saw any thing so enormous as the height of them. However, Marquis, I really think that, if the *Presidente* does not put on one, incessantly, you cannot in decency, continue your devoirs any longer to her.

LETTER

LETTER LI.

TIS then a settled affair,* it seems.—

Say what I will, you remain still enamoured of the *Presidente*. She has sacrificed a beloved rival to you, and you are in triumph. How ready is your vanity to take advantage of every thing! But, I should laugh heartily, if your boasted victory should end in her giving you an *audience of leave*, in a day or two: For, it is not at all impossible, but that the sacrifice you so much glory in, may be merely a *finesse d'amour*. During the free commerce you have had among women, have you never picked up so much experience, as to suspect every sentiment they affect? But, if your yielding fair one should have only played you off, to awake the drowsy passion of her former Celadon; if you shall find yourself, after all, but made a tool of, and used as the *whip* of

VOL. II.

K

artifice,

artifice, or *spur* of jealousy, 'I beg you may not lose your senses in wonder and amazement.

The *Presidente*, you'll tell me, has not the least manner of cunning, and is therefore incapable of such a stratagem. My dear Marquis, love is an admirable tutor, and the dullest persons imaginable in other matters, frequently discover a more subtle, just and certain discernment, than the wisest heads, where the interest of their hearts happen to come into question. But, let us quit your particular instance, and speak in general, of men in the like circumstances.

They imagine, just as you do, that the sacrifice which is made them of a rival, supposes their superiority over him. But how often does it happen, that the formality of this renounce, is a meer farce? If she really discards him, either she loved him,

him, or she did not. If she had loved him, 'tis plain by her quitting, that she loves him no longer : And in that case, what glory have you to boast, upon such a preference ? If she never loved him, what have you to be proud of, in triumphing over a man, toward whom she had always been indifferent ?

There is another case also, where you may be preferred, without having any more reason to flatter yourself on the conquest; and that is, when the vanity of your mistress is greater than her passion for the disgraced lover. Your rank, figure, character, and fortune, may determine such a one in your favour. It is very rare, (I speak it to the confusion of women, nor are men a bit more rational in this respect) that a lover, who has nothing but passion and high sentiments to urge, can long stand his ground against one who is distinguished by his quality,

his station, his dependents, his liveries, equipage, &c.^f * * * * *

* * * *. Besides, the deceased president was a judge, and without doubt as formal and old-fashioned as his band or peruke. What an impression to be worn away, by a courtier and a warrior, such as you !

Well, Marquis, will you believe my prophecies again ? What did I tell you lately ? Has the *Chevalier* found it such

^f The passage which follows here, in the French, appears unintelligible to me. The construction of the words is easy enough, but the meaning or scope of them, is difficult. I have, therefore, left them out in the translation ; chusing rather to give *no sense* than *nonsense*. But shall give them here, in the original, to exercise the ingenuity of my readers.—Dès que l'Amant le plus tendre peut faire rougir une femme ; dès qu'elle n'ose avouer son Vainqueur ; dès qu'elle n'ose meme se faire un merite de la sacrifier, je le prédis, son règne ne fera pas long. Elle ne sera embarrassée que de choisir dans toutes les bonnes raisons qu'elle aura de le quitter.

a dif-

a difficulty to persuade your *Penelope*?—
This desponding mistress, just expiring on
the loss of one lover, in less than a fort-
night, has accepted another, pretends a
passion for him, surrenders, and is for-
faken. Has she lost any time, think you?
Your sentiments, I pray, upon this sub-
ject.

Adieu.

L E T T E R LII.

YES, Marquis, it is to my friendship, it is to my counsels, that the Countess owes the tranquillity she now begins to enjoy. But I cannot conceive for what reason you should complain of the indifference she marks toward you. And do you expect pity from me? I shall have great compassion for the wounds of vanity truly! Men are the oddest creatures! They would have women still regard them as objects of consequence, tho' in quitting them, they generally neglect nothing to manifest their indifference toward them.

What signifies to you, the love or hate of one, you have now no longer any passion for? Your jealousy of the little Duke, is so unaccountably ridiculous, that it made me laugh outright, when I came to that part of your letter. Is it not natural and rational too, that a woman should console

console herself for your loss, by listening to the addresses of a person who knows so much better, how to prize her beauty and merit? Now prithee inform me, my good client, by what rule in equity you are become *plaintiff* in this suit? Examine your conscience, and subscribe to Madame de Seigné's expression, that *your heart is mad*, my poor Marquis!

However, the proposition you make me is whimsical enough. It would be some sport certainly, to assist in your scheme of revenge, against your faithless mistress; if it was only out of spleen, on one hand, and for the oddity of the thing, on the other, we should commence a sort of a mock-amour, forthwith. But such a frolic may take an unlucky turn perhaps; for love, even the most innocent, may be compared to a kitten, that is apt to scratch you, while you are only playing with it.

Therefore, friend Marquis, you may keep your heart to yourself, for me; I should make a scruple to deprive commerce of so choice a commodity. Besides, I am really so weary of the insipidity of men, that for the future, I shall trouble myself with none of them, except my friends. One always feels some regret at parting with a lover. I begin to taste the sweets of repose, and would continue to enjoy them.

It is whimsical enough, that you should first imagine you needed consolation yourself, and then take it into your head that I required the same relief, because the Marquis *de* . . . is gone upon his embassy. Indeed you are deceived. My friends suffice me, as I told you before; and if you would remain among that number, I advise you to send me no more *billets-doux*—otherwise—

Adieu Marquis.

LETTER

LETTER LIH.

I Declare, Marquis, that I shall at once break off all manner of commerce with you, for the future, if you continue to accost me in the way you have lately done. What evil spirit has put it into your head, to attempt rivalling the absent? Was any creature ever so teased and rallied, as I was yesterday evening? However, you entered into your part with such address, that whatever mind I had to be angry with you, I could not find in my heart to be so. What kind of event this may take, I cannot say; but this one thing is certain, that you spend your time very idly; for be assured, that I have not the least symptom of passion for you at present; and what is more, I can answer for it, that I never shall. Yes, Sir,—never. But, 'tis merry enough, to persuade one that they are afflicted, that they want

K 5

conso-

consolation ; in short, to take upon you to judge of others feelings, better than they can themselves ! This is like the impertinence of the shoe-maker, who pretended to tell his customers where the shoe pinched them.

But to speak of this matter, a little more seriously. Prithee reflect for a moment, upon the folly of your attempt. Would it be generous, would it be decent in me, think you, to supplant my friend ? For a woman who has assumed the character of a *Mentor* with you, who has acted the part of a parent to you, to dwindle, after all, into that of a mistress ? Rambling libertine, as you are, if youth and beauty could not hold you, what bands should such an old maid as I, pretend to tie you with ? Perhaps your sole view in my conquest, may be meerly to know, whether love is the same with me in practice, as it is in speculation. But I will save you the expence

expenſe of ſo much time and trouble, and ſhall ſatisfy your curioſity, *gratis*.

You muſt know, then, that women, one and all of us, rarely act conformably to their ſentiments. This is what you would have the fullſt inſtance of, in a commerce of galantry with me. All that I have ſaid to you, upon love and women, would not inſtruct you after what manner I ſhould conduct myſelf on ſuch an occaſion. There is vaſt difference between thinking and feeling; between acting for ourſelves, and reaſoning for others. You would then diſcover in me a number of ſingularities, that would ſoon make you weary of your engagements. I have quite a different caſt of mind from moſt women.— You may know them all, without knowing *Ninon*. And believe me, that all you might diſcover, new or extraordinary in me, would not repay you half the expenſe of inſtigation. You ſet my price too

high, I tell you before-hand : you expend too much in expectation ; more than I am responsible for. I should never *quit cost*, believe me. Dispose of yourself in a more brilliant list. The court affords you groupes of young and fair, with whom, you will run no hazard of tiring yourself with exertions of wit and philosophy.

I confess, however, that I should have been pleased if you had called in to see me to-day ; for I was most of the afternoon, plagued with a dispute about the antients and moderns. It is bothering my head so much still, that I am very near accepting your compliment seriously, that I am not yet far enough on the decline, to occupy myself entirely with the study of science or to bury myself alive, with musty antients. If you would behave a little rationally, and drop the humour of making speeches, I really think I should prefer your company to any other, to interrupt
and

and enliven, now and then, such serious occupations. But you are so ungovernable, and such a profligate, that I dare hardly invite you to sup with me to-morrow. I mistake in saying *to-morrow*; for it is now near two o'clock in the morning, and I consider that my letter cannot reach you 'till noon: So take notice, that it is this very evening I expect you.

Will you complain of me now? Is not this an assignation in form? But let this careless freedom convince you, that I am not much afraid of you, and that I shall attend to your amorous views, no farther than will just amuse me. You ought to know that I am not a person to be easily imposed upon, that way. I have ye all by heart.

Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R L I V.

I Ought no longer, to conceal from you, the last resolve of the Countess, with regard to you. While I could preserve her secret, without betraying the friendship I had conceived for you, I have been faithful to her. But should I reserve what I am now going to communicate to you, you would probably, have cause one day to reproach me severely. Notwithstanding the many infidelities you have been guilty of, whatever pains she has taken, to persuade you that you were entirely forgotten, you have never ceased to be most tenderly remembered by her.— Tho' she has endeavoured to punish you, by an affected indifference, she could never refrain from the pleasure of seeing you: And it was in compliment to her, that I have sometimes feigned quarrels with you, in order to bring you the of-
tender

tener on your penitentials, before me.— But all these shifts have not been sufficient, to satisfy a heart so intimately affected; and the Countess is upon the very crisis of executing a design, which I have a long time opposed. You may inform yourself of the particulars, from the letter she wrote to me yesterday; and which I send you inclosed.

*A Letter from the Countess, to
Madame de L'ENCLOS.*

“ If you would remain my friend, dear Ninon, cease to combat my resolution. You know that it is not a sudden transport. It is neither the result of a momentary resentment, a hasty pique, nor of despair. I have concealed nothing from you. The possession of the Marquis's heart, would have constituted my highest felicity, had I been able to have insured it for life. I should have been
certain

certain of losing it for ever, if I had been indiscreet enough to have accorded him those favours he solicited for. His inconstancy has shewn me, that the opposite conduct is not always a certain method of preserving a lover. One must renounce this passion entirely, since men are found incapable of an attachment more tender, tho' not less pure, than that of simple friendship.

“ You know too well, that I am not sufficiently cured, not to feel perturbations every time I see the Marquis.— Flight is the only remedy for this evil, and it is the one I am determined to betake myself to. I am not in the least apprehensive of what the world may say, upon my retreat into the country. I have prevented those who might perhaps be surprized on this occasion. It is known that I have lately gained a considerable process against my husband's executors.
I have

I have made a plausible pretext of going to take possession of the estate of - - -, which they contested with me. I have thus obviated the malignant satisfaction of the public, in putting their own construction upon my election of solitude; and at the same time, removed all suspicion from the Marquis, of his having the least part in this determination.

“ I send you herewith, his picture and letters. Good Gods, how weak is human nature ! Must it require a conflict then, to quit a plague ? But the strife is over—and my resolves shall never—never falter more. Sympathize with me the meanwhile, my dear friend ; and remember the promise you have given me in confidence, to declare the most perfect indifference, on my part. Whoever breaks off in resentment, publishes their pique and regret at the rupture. 'Tis but a modest way of begging a reconciliation.

And

And as I have now, not the least desire of renewing my engagements with the Marquis, I would have you return him the articles I send you ; obliging him, as we agreed upon before, to make me the same restitution. You may say, that the exigence of my affairs has required me to leave *Paris*, for some time ; but I intreat that you will not be the first to mention me to him.

“ I should be inconsolable, my dear Ninon, at parting from you, did I not hope to see you frequently in my retirement. You write freely to your friends ; and if you judge of them by the tenderness and esteem they bear you, there is not a single one among them, more worthy of that title, than me. I reckon upon your correspondence, 'till I shall have the higher pleasure of your converse. You are not now to learn my sentiments about you.

Farewel.”

I have

I have no advice to give you, Marquis, upon this occasion ; and all the favour I shall desire of you is, never to expose the dissingenuousness of my conduct, in this affair, which the Countess would have just reason to resent. All that I have to excuse me to myself, is, that you have loved her too fondly, to look upon this resolve with indifference ; and if I am not much mistaken, I might, perhaps, have injured the interests of both, by concealing it from you.

Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R LV.

I AM charmed at what you have done, Marquis, and you are a most worthy creature, after all. Fear not—Your behaviour, my instances, and better than either, her own unextinguished flame, will conspire to conquer the resistance of the Countess. Every thing ought to determine her to accept the offer you make her, of your hand; and I can venture to promise you, even at present, that her pride alone resists equally our intreaties, and her own inclinations.

I pressed her warmly this morning, to declare in your favour; and her last defence was, the fear of new revolts, on your part. “Chear up, says I; one very promising circumstance, on his side, is, that he is now undeceived with regard to other women, upon comparing them with
the;

the one he had quitted. Men of sense or principle, have but a certain number of trespasses to permit themselves. The Marquis has already passed through those which his youth and condition of life seemed almost to justify. He indulged himself in them, at a time when they might be at least excuseable. He has sped all the frolics of his age and class; and having thus paid his tribute to the *fashion of the times*, he is become now, *free of life*; and may be at liberty to act agreeably to reason and virtue, for the remainder of it. The only objection, *of modern days*, that is likely to stand against him, may be his appearing too fond a husband: But this is a foible which will readily be pardoned in him, by those who either see, or know you.

“You risk nothing then, my dear Countess; you have yourself passed through the character of a *fine lady*, but had too much

much sense to continue in it long. You quitted it upon trial, and the Marquis imitates your example. Remit therefore, his past excesses, and suffer not your obstinacy to kill him with despair. The world would exclaim against you."

In short, I prayed and pressed, without ceasing, and left her in a sort of irresolution, which I dare say will soon be determined in your favour, as her resistance has probably begun already to render her extremely uneasy:

Well, Marquis, if the agitation that arises from all this, will give you leisure to reflect upon what I formerly told you, will you not be apt to think me still in contradiction with myself? I had at first advised you to treat the passion of love *en cavalier*, and to trouble yourself with no more of it, than might just serve to amuse you; and that either as lover or galant, you should
suffer

suffer yourself to be bound, by a *slip-knot* only. But then I spoke to you upon a general topic, and relative to the generality of women meerly. Could I at that time, prophesy that you would be so happy, to meet and engage with such a charmer as the Countess, who to the beauties of her own sex has joined all the merits of yours? What a lucky mortal you are! Now going to possess in the same person, at once the most amiable mistress, and the most estimable friend! Deign to admit me a third in this choice union, and I shall not deem myself less fortunate than either. For if there be in nature, an higher bliss than rejoicing in the happiness of our friends, we must attend 'till angels shall pronounce it.

Farewel.

END OF THE LETTERS.

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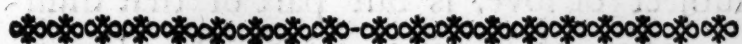
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END OF THE LETTER

$$\frac{1}{(k+1)!} \frac{d^{k+1}}{dx^{k+1}} \left(\frac{1}{1-x} \right) = \frac{1}{(k+1)!} \frac{d^{k+1}}{dx^{k+1}} \left(\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n \right) = \frac{1}{(k+1)!} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{d^{k+1}}{dx^{k+1}} x^n = \frac{1}{(k+1)!} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} n(n-1)\cdots(n-k) x^{n-k-1} = \frac{1}{(k+1)!} \sum_{n=k+1}^{\infty} n(n-1)\cdots(n-k) x^{n-k-1} = \frac{1}{(k+1)!} \sum_{m=0}^{\infty} (m+k+1)(m+k)\cdots(m+1) x^m = \sum_{m=0}^{\infty} \frac{(m+k+1)!}{k!} x^m = \sum_{m=0}^{\infty} \binom{m+k}{k} x^m = \frac{1}{(1-x)^{k+1}}.$$



T H E
CONCLUSION.



THE TRANSLATOR
T O
THE READER.

I Have here finished this Collection of Letters, which I hope will entertain the reader, as much as they have done the translator; for in truth, there is an uncommon deal of wit, humour, spirit, and philosophic sense, running thro' the whole.

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L

However,

However, it may be plainly perceived in these writings, that *Ninon's* principles of philosophy, had been tainted by her conversation with the greatest male wits of France, *La Bruyere, Rochefaucault, St. Evremond, Fontaine, &c.* For the cynical manner, in which she treats the subject of love, is but part of that disingenuous philosophy, which the French writers in general, apply to every human affection or moral; resolving friendship, gratitude, filial and paternal ties, in short, every species and degree of virtue, into a *selfish motive.*

'Tis true, that *Madame de l'Enclos* has laid open the avenues, and inmost recesses of the female heart, betrayed its weakness, and pointed out those peculiar foibles, where the arts of men may attack it with most probability of success. But then, it may at the same time be observed, that she describes her sex, in those instances, as in
a *state*

a state of nature, unimproved by education, unrestrained by religion, and unassisted by grace: And truly, under such a state of *original sin*, she has been perhaps, at too great an expence of address, to circumvent so defenceless an enemy.

Most of the French writers determine the morals of mankind, from the sentiments of their own breasts. But reasoning from particulars to generals, has never been admitted for sound philosophy. Tho' a thief at the gallows, confesses his constant disposition to steal, we are not surely from thence to argue, that another man may not view a purse of gold, with as little inclination to purloin it, as to rob a tulip of its colour.

To this class of writers, I could wish that the world would join in refusing their arrogated title of *Moralists*; and more justly stile them *Satirists*. Tho'
I think

I think that even this, would be treating them with too much respect; for as they speak of human nature, rather with the contempt of a *Lampooner*, I shall always choose to deem them *Libellers* of mankind.

Such men may be said, as my friend remarks, in his notes upon translation,^g to hold out the wrong side of tapestry to view, by which all the beauties of colouring and proportion are concealed, and only the grosser lines and coarser figures exposed.

The pleasure, consequent to acts of benevolence and charity, has been often mistaken for the end; from whence, selfishness has, by superficial reasons, been

^g *Essay on classic translation*, in this work. See latter part of the *translator to the reader*.

imputed

imputed to virtue. But a very little abstraction may help one to discover, that pleasure is the *companion* only, and neither the *end*, or *motive*. To support life and health, is the intent or purpose of eating and drinking. To these, the relishes of taste are added, from the meer bounty of Providence; to *gratify*, as well as *satisfy* the natural appetites. And the pleasure arising in the mind, upon having done, or even designed any worthy action, may be something analogous to this.

I shall make use of the above allusion, farther, to carry me through the argument I would maintain; for I do not deny, that there is a *moral epicurism*, as well as a *natural one*; and that by frequent contemplation upon the *concomitant* pleasure, it may become at length, the sole *end*, in particular agents. So that virtue may thus be reduced to sensuality, and have
its

its pure essence quite destroyed, in the minds of such persons. But surely, this does not alter its original nature, any more than different colours become one, because the jaundiced eye perceives them alike, through a tainted medium.

It is a received opinion, that the bulk of mankind do not know the real motives from which they act. It is possible indeed that I, for instance, may be guided by principles which I may be ignorant of. But then, in the name of common sense, how come these presumptuous reasoners to be better acquainted with them, than I am myself? When such subtle philosophers pretend to tell me, that I am actuated by motives which I am not conscious of in my own breast, they seem to talk as impertinently, as the *shoe-maker*, mentioned by *Ninon*, just now.^a

^a Letter LIII, last lines of first paragraph.

Besides

Besides, I will admit this ignorance, in *natural* actions only, in such as are meerly *mechanical*. But with regard to *moral* ones, the nature of them is determined by the *consciousness* of the agent. And if his resolves arise simply, in his own mind, from principles of humanity, benevolence, or any other generous emotion, the virtue of them is pure and disinterested, notwithstanding the *attendant* pleasure ; which arising only from subsequent reflection, can no more taint the excellence of the first impulse, than poison thrown into a stream, can infect its source.

Readers, Farewel.

THE TRANSLATOR.

F I N I S.

To the READER

Believe me, I will admit the ignorance in
a great measure only, in which is the nearly
entirely. But I have to say, that
the nature of it is not the same as the
complexity of the subject. And I am re-
solved this time, in his own mind, to
principles of humanity, benevolence, of
and other generous emotion, the virtue of
truth is pure and distinct, and is not
found in the world by a man, which
is not only the highest of all, but
no more than the excellence of the last
impulse, that portion shows into a heart
can into its source.

Respectfully,
Wm. L. Garrison

THE TRANSLATOR

